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## THE SAN JACINTO CAMPAIGN.

EUGENE C. BARKER.

[INTRODUCTION: In this paper little claim is made to originality of matter. I have been able to find but few documents bearing directly upon the San Jacinto campaign that were unknown to others who have handled the subject,—and those few are not of great importance. But from all of the available material I have attempted to construct a clear and absolutely unpartisan narrative, a task which can hardly be said to have been accomplished with any degree of success as yet by any historian save Bancroft. To this end, I have confined myself strictly to a narration of facts, avoiding—so far as is consistent with an intelligent treatment of the subject—any expression of personal opinion or discussion. And where, upon disputed points, it has been necessary to choose between conflicting statements, I have endeavored to present in the notes both sides of the question, in order that the reader may draw his own conclusions.

A word is necessary concerning the material in English for a history of this campaign. Though there is a good deal, very little of it is contemporaneous, Houston's letters, published in the appendix to Yoakum's *History of Texas*, a few letters and proclamations in the Archives of Texas, and some newspaper clippings, circulars, and letters in the Austin Papers being all of such a character that I have found. Most of the remainder was written at various dates between 1837 and 1860, while Houston was prominent in politics and had both devoted friends and bitter enemies, and is strongly colored by personal prejudices. In presenting the main facts from different view points, however, and acting as checks upon one another, these documents are valuable, but need to be used with caution.

Several documents are published supplementary to this paper, the object being to popularize much that has hitherto been practically inaccessible to the public. Those written by Kuykendall, Turner, and Baker, now appear in print for the first time, and Santa Anna's Report is new in English; the first two, with Houston's official report of the battle of San Jacinto, are published in full, but in the extracts from Baker's letter and all the other documents only the main narrative has been retained. The documents are arranged in the chronological order—so far as I have been able to determine it—in which they were written. They are sparingly annotated, and unless otherwise indicated the notes are those of the respective writers. To each one of them I have prefixed a brief bibliography, and a summary covering disputed points.

On account of space limitations, it has been necessary to select the documents printed, and to omit some that are well worth publication. The published works used in addition to these in the preparation of this paper will be found in the attached list (pp. 344-45), which, though not intended to be exhaustive, contains, I believe, all the important material at present known upon the subject.

In the notes to this paper, for the sake of convenience, citations to Foote's *Texas and the Texans*, Kennedy's *Texas*, Yoakum's *History of Texas*, Bancroft's *North Mexican States and Texas*, and Brown's *History of Texas* are made by the name of the author instead of by the title of the book.]

The so-called San Jacinto campaign<sup>1</sup> occupied just one month and ten days of the spring of 1836, beginning with Houston's assumption of the command at Gonzales (March 11), and ending with the battle of San Jacinto. During the first five weeks of this time the chief occupation of the Texan army consisted apparently in the effort to keep out of reach of the Mexicans, but for the last five days it assumed a more belligerent policy, and, in the end, almost annihilated the enemy on the field of San Jacinto. Before commencing the narrative, however, it will be necessary to glance, first, at the distribution of Texan and Mexican forces at the beginning of the campaign; and then to take a brief retrospect of Texan affairs for the preceding few months.

Santa Anna had arrived in Bexar (San Antonio) on February 23, 1836, with an army 2,500 or 3,000 strong,<sup>2</sup> and sat down to the

<sup>1</sup>It might, perhaps, be more accurately entitled "The Retreat from Gonzales to San Jacinto."

<sup>2</sup>R. M. Potter, in *Fall of the Alamo*, 16—a reprint from *Magazine of American History*, January, 1878.

siege of the Alamo, defended by a hundred and fifty-six men under command of Colonels Travis and Bowie. Another division of 900 or 1,000 men<sup>1</sup> was advancing from Matamoros under General Urrea towards San Patricio and Goliad.

The Texan volunteers had successfully measured arms with Mexican regulars in the fall and winter of 1835 at Gonzales, Goliad, Lipantitlan, Concepcion, and San Antonio; and besides the garrison in the Alamo at this time, there were nearly five hundred men with Fannin at Goliad, about a hundred with Johnson and Grant at San Patricio, and some four hundred on the march to concentrate at Gonzales.

The consultation which met October 16, 1835, but, from scarcity of members, did not organize until November 3, had declared that Texas would "defend with arms the republican principles of the constitution of 1824" against the centralizing encroachments of Santa Anna, and, on November 12, elected Sam Houston commander-in-chief of "all the forces called into service during the war," giving him the rank of major-general. And Houston, without attempting to assume command of the volunteers then besieging San Antonio, had established his headquarters at San Felipe and begun with scant success the work of organizing a regular army.

The Mexicans had temporarily abandoned Texas after the evacuation of Bexar by General Cos, about the middle of December, and the General Council, encouraged by promises of generous support from the republicans of Mexico and desiring to secure the contentment of their volunteers by keeping them busy, determined to direct an attack upon Matamoros and continue the war in the enemy's country. Governor Smith was opposed to this expedition, but the Council having authorized it over his veto and separately commissioned both J. W. Fannin, Jr., and F. W. Johnson to prepare for it, he ordered General Houston, on January 6, to proceed to Goliad, to take charge of the troops there and at San Patricio and Refugio and lead them upon Matamoros. The latter found the forces at these places unprepared and in considerable confusion, and becom-

<sup>1</sup>Bancroft, II, 222.

Santa Anna (Report in Caro's *Verdadera Idea de la Primera Campaña de Tejas*, 79) says this force was 1300 strong; while Urrea (*Diario*, 7) says it numbered only 550, 200 of whom remained in Matamoros.

ing convinced that the expedition was foredoomed to failure, returned to Washington, reported as much to the governor on January 30,<sup>1</sup> and obtained a furlough until March 1 to treat with the Indians of East Texas, a task that had been imposed upon him by the General Council a month before.<sup>2</sup>

Houston, however, did not leave the frontier without making a strong effort to prevent the expedition which he was convinced could not succeed. Hearing of Governor Smith's deposition from office, he assembled the volunteers and declared the undertaking unauthorized; and such was the effect of his speech that when Johnson arrived at Refugio he found that of the men there and at Goliad barely a hundred would follow him without the order of the governor.<sup>3</sup> Temporarily relinquishing the Matamoras plan perforce, then, he and his colleague, Dr. Grant, advanced with this small party to San Patricio. Here half of them were surprised by Urrea during the stormy night of February 27 and either killed or captured, Johnson and three companions only escaping. The remainder of the company, returning from a foraging expedition three days later, were ambushed near the town, and only two or three escaped the slaughter.

Fannin, who had arrived in the meantime at Refugio, being apprised of the approach of the enemy and the disaster to Johnson and Grant's party, moved back to Goliad and began preparations to hold that post with nearly five hundred men, volunteers chiefly from Georgia and Alabama.

Meanwhile the provisional government, through the quarrel between the governor and General Council, had become thoroughly disorganized; but fortunately a resolution had been passed in December, in spite of the governor's veto, authorizing the election of delegates to a convention at Washington, March 1. The representatives had plenary power to formulate a government *ad interim*, and when the convention assembled, independence was declared and

<sup>1</sup>Houston to Smith (Copy), January 30, 1836.—Archives of Texas. Also in Brown, I, 502-16.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal of the General Council*, 194.

<sup>3</sup>Johnson to General Council, January 30, 1836 (Copy).—Archives of Texas.

immediate steps taken to organize a republic; while General Houston—a delegate, strangely enough, from Refugio, though he was a resident of Nacogdoches,—was formally re-elected commander of the Texan forces,<sup>1</sup> and urged to place himself at the head of the troops then in Gonzales and hasten to the relief of the Alamo.

To take up now the San Jacinto campaign, on Sunday, March 6, when Santa Anna had just concluded the storming of the Alamo, General Houston made a farewell speech to the convention and began his journey to Gonzales. Having been informed of the alarming situation of the garrison in Bexar through a letter from Colonel Travis to the convention, dated March 3,<sup>2</sup> he formed, as he went, a plan for its relief. Fannin, at Goliad, was ordered to advance with the bulk of his division to the west bank of the Cibolo and await there the arrival of the commander-in-chief who would join him with all the forces from Gonzales and march to Travis's rescue.<sup>3</sup> On reaching Gonzales, however (March 11), he was met by a rumor that the Alamo had been captured, and privately confiding in its truth, though pretending to disbelieve it, he dispatched an express

<sup>1</sup>Yoakum explains (II, 74) that this was necessary, because Houston's former commission was held under the Mexican Constitution of 1824. In 1837, President Burnet was of this opinion, too; for, in another connection, he says (*Telegraph and Texas Register*, August 26, 1837—Austin Papers, 44): "The provisional gubernatorial government of Texas in January, 1836, was a *Mexican* state government, organized under the Mexican Constitution of 1824, \* \* \*. By necessary consequence, all the offices created by that state government, and all commissions civil and military, issued by and under its authority, were purely and properly *Mexican*, \* \* \*. On the 2d of March, \* \* \* they declared Texas to be \* \* \* independent. \* \* \*. The 8th section of the schedule of the new Constitution provided for *all civil* officers remaining and discharging their duties until others should be appointed, etc. \* \* \*. But there was no such provision in regard to military appointments, \* \* \*." But, writing of this particular case in 1860 (*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 50), he says: "\* \* \* Gen. Houston \* \* \* asked and received a renewal of his commission as commander-in-chief. This was a useless consumption of time; for all, civil and military, recognized him as such as fully before as after the reappointment."

<sup>2</sup>Gammel's *Laws of Texas*, I, 845-46.

<sup>3</sup>Yoakum, II, 104, note; also Houston to Collinsworth, March 13, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 473-74.

to Fannin, countermanding his previous order and instructing him, "as soon as practicable," to fall back to Victoria.<sup>1</sup>

At Gonzales Houston found, according to his own report, "three hundred and seventy-four effective men, without two days' provisions,<sup>2</sup> many without arms, and others without any ammunition;"<sup>3</sup> and although a few had served under Austin and Burleson the preceding year, the most of them were entirely innocent of any knowledge of military discipline. While waiting, therefore, for confirmation of the fall of the Alamo, he seized the opportunity to organize his force. A regiment was formed with Edward Burleson for colonel, and Sidney Sherman and Alexander Somervell lieutenant-colonel and major respectively. Houston regretted, however, that he had not time to teach the men "the first principles of the drill."

Deaf Smith, Henry Karnes, and R. E. Handy, sent out on the morning of the 13th with instructions to approach near enough to San Antonio to learn the fate of the Alamo, met Mrs. Dickinson, the wife of a lieutenant killed in the Alamo, some twenty miles from Gonzales, and learned that the worst had happened, and that a division of the enemy under General Sesma was already on the march eastward. They returned with her to camp, where they arrived about twilight, and her report threw both army and town into the greatest consternation. Thirty-two of Santa Anna's victims had left their homes in Gonzales no longer than two weeks before, and the grief of their stricken families was intense. Others, with ears only for the news that the Mexicans were advancing, hastened to flee for their lives—a few of the little army who had left their own families unprotected doubtless among them.<sup>4</sup> Hous-

<sup>1</sup>Houston to Fannin, March 11, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 471-72: also in Brown, I, 588-89.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Kuykendall says (*infra*, 293), "Pork, corn-meal, and vegetables were supplied us in abundance by the people of Gonzales, and we had brought a good supply of bacon and sugar and coffee from home."

<sup>3</sup>Houston to Collinsworth, March 15, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 475-76.

This number is probably correct, for Moseley Baker reported (clipping of the *Telegraph and Texas Register*—Austin Papers) only 275 men assembled on March 8.

<sup>4</sup>Houston to Collinsworth, March 15, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 476.

ton himself thought his position too advanced and his force too small to meet the enemy at Gonzales, and in the midst of the general excitement ordered his men to prepare for retreat. Some of his few baggage wagons being surrendered to the helpless citizens of the town, the soldiers were forced to destroy all clothing and stores, except what they could carry on their persons;<sup>1</sup> and his only two pieces of cannon were thrown into the Guadalupe. Before midnight he was on the march,<sup>2</sup> his plan, as reported by himself at the time, being to halt on the Colorado until strengthened sufficiently to meet any force that the Mexicans might dare to send against him.<sup>3</sup> And before morning Gonzales was burned to the ground, that it might not afford shelter and supplies to the approaching enemy.<sup>4</sup>

At the Colorado, Houston would be near the most populous section of the state where he could easily command its resources and receive quick reinforcement; while so long as he could hold that line, the Mexicans would be restricted to an uninhabited country, where they could do no damage to Texas, and whence, if held long enough in check, they might be compelled to withdraw merely through failure of their own supplies.

After receiving several small reinforcements along the line, the army reached Burnham's crossing on the Colorado in the afternoon of the 17th, when Houston reported his strength as six hundred men.<sup>5</sup> Remaining here two days, they crossed the river and

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Kuykendall, *infra*, 294.

<sup>2</sup>Bancroft (II, 225) follows Foote in dating the beginning of the retreat on March 12.

<sup>3</sup>Houston to Collinsworth, March 15, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 475-77.

Even Houston's critics, though they object to his precipitancy, agree that he did right in leaving Gonzales: President Burnet says (*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 52; *infra*, 327), "The retreat from Gonzales was inevitable, an absolute necessity. The grand error had consisted in choosing two feeble, isolated positions, Goliad and San Antonio, as the bases of defensive operations."

<sup>4</sup>Bancroft (II, 225, note 54) thinks the evidence warrants the conclusion that Houston verbally ordered the destruction of the town; though he himself repeatedly denied it. See *infra*, 318.

<sup>5</sup>Houston to Collinsworth, March 17, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 477-78.



descended the east bank to Beason's Ford, near the present town of Columbus, where they pitched camp for nearly a week.

Before leaving Burnham's however, a scouting party, consisting of Deaf Smith, Henry Karnes, R. E. Handy, and three others, was sent back toward the Navidad to reconnoitre, and encountering a similar body of the enemy at Rocky Creek, they took one prisoner and learned that General Sesma was near with a considerable force.<sup>1</sup> The latter, indeed, who had left Bexar on the 11th with orders from Santa Anna to proceed through San Felipe and Harrisburg to Anahuac, encamped the night of the 21st<sup>2</sup> on the west bank of the Colorado, only two miles above the Texans. He had but 725 men,<sup>3</sup> and having already asked for reinforcements, and finding the river well defended, he made no attempt to cross.

In this position the two armies remained five days, Houston receiving reinforcements all the time until, by the 26th, he could have mustered from twelve to fourteen hundred men,<sup>4</sup> though the two cannon for which he had sent William T. Austin to Velasco did not arrive. Several prisoners were taken from time to time, and almost the exact strength of the enemy being learned,<sup>5</sup> the

<sup>1</sup>Hockley to Rusk, March 21, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 479-80.

Foote, following the narrative of John Sharpe, has the dates all wrong here.

<sup>2</sup>Brown (II, 6) says they did not arrive till the 23rd.

<sup>3</sup>Filisola's *Representation*, 8—translation in State Library.

<sup>4</sup>For various estimates of the Texan force here, see *infra*, 328. Sesma (Filisola's *Representation*, 8) thought them about 1,200; John Sharpe, who left camp on the 25th, reported (circular to the citizens of Brazoria, March 27, 1836—Austin Papers) 1,000 to 1,200 already assembled, and that he had met "several small companies pushing on for camp;" Mosely Baker (*Telegraph and Texas Register*, March 24, 1836—Austin Papers) reported 800 men on the 22nd: G. W. Hockley reported to Rusk for Houston (Yoakum, II, 481) "upward of seven hundred men," on the 23rd, and Houston himself adding to this the next day said, "I expect in a few days to receive two hundred volunteers and regulars. \* \* \* In a few days my force will be highly respectable." Subsequently Houston declared that his "effective" force never exceeded 700 (*infra*, 325).

<sup>5</sup>Yoakum (II, 110-11), entirely without justification—for he publishes Hockley's and Houston's letters, of March 23rd and 24th, to Rusk (II, 480-84),—says the Texans understood the enemy's force to number at least 2,650, "with heavy reinforcements coming up."

Texans became eager to fight. Houston, too, up to the very day of his retreat, seemed to think it desirable to engage Sesma here;<sup>1</sup> but suddenly changed his mind, and late in the afternoon of March 26th began to fall back towards the Brazos.

Why he took such a step is not evident.<sup>2</sup> So long as he remained on the Colorado he received daily reinforcements—as he himself said, his force was rapidly becoming “respectable.” And though considerable excitement had been created by the refugees from Gonzales, it had been largely allayed through his assurances that the enemy should not pass the Colorado. It seems likely, indeed, that merely by holding that line, without risking a battle, his strength would soon have become sufficient to encounter the combined Mexican army. When, however, along with the news of Fannin’s misfortune, it became known that the Texans were falling back from the Colorado, the wildest confusion seized upon all east of that river. Reinforcements on their way to join the army faced about, and fled with their families to put them in safety beyond the Sabine. And many of the volunteers already with Houston—either

<sup>1</sup>Houston, writing to R. R. Royal, March 24th (Yoakum, II, 485), says, “on the Colorado I make my stand”; John Sharpe, leaving camp on the 25th, announced to the people of Brazoria on the 27th that “\* \* \* our army now will never leave the Colorado, but to go westward, \* \* \*” and declared (Foote, II, 278, note) that he did so by authority of General Houston; and Baker, Coleman, and others, assert that on the morning of the 26th the general promised to attack Sesma at daybreak the next morning (*infra*, 277).

<sup>2</sup>General Tolsa had arrived on the 24th with reinforcements which increased Sesma’s division to 1,300 or 1,400; but neither Houston nor any body else, so far as I know, ever intimated that this had the slightest influence on the Texan retreat—in fact the army seems to have left the Colorado thinking that Sesma had no more than 800 men. Yoakum says Tolsa arrived about the time the Texans encamped at Beason’s. Bancroft suggests that, Peter Kerr having brought the news of Fannin’s disaster on the 25th, Houston retreated, fearing that Urrea would now gain his rear. Houston, however, was pretty sure of Fannin’s defeat as early as the 23rd (Houston to Rusk, March 23, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 482-84); but, as we have already seen, his determination to hold the Colorado did not waver therefor. In after years, when hard pressed for a reason, he himself could think of nothing better than that a battle with Sesma must necessarily have been indecisive and that he had no means of transporting wounded soldiers in a retreat after battle (*infra*, 319, 335).

with or without permission—left him for the same purpose, so that when he reached the Brazos his force was reduced more than half.<sup>1</sup>

Arriving at San Felipe on the 28th, the little army remained over night and set out the next day for Groce's, fifteen or twenty miles up the river. Many thought that since most of the settlements were down the river, the movement should be made in that direction, and Moseley Baker and Wily Martin refused to follow Houston further.<sup>2</sup> The former, therefore, was ordered to guard San Felipe with his company of a hundred and twenty men;<sup>3</sup> while the latter, with a hundred men,<sup>4</sup> was sent to hold the crossing at Fort Bend. Dissatisfaction, indeed, was general throughout the ranks, and was only increased by the difficulties of the march through muddy roads and a driving rain. After encamping near Mill creek on the night of the 29th and marching but a few miles the next day, they came to Groce's on the 31st and went into camp for nearly a fortnight.<sup>5</sup>

Santa Anna, in the meantime, having ordered General Gaona to diverge from his original route to Nacogdoches and advance from

<sup>1</sup>For a graphic picture of the excited condition of the country at this time, see Kate Scurry Terrell's *The Runaway Scrape*, in *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 669-71; for a vivid contemporary account, consult *The Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue Harris*, in the *QUARTERLY*, IV, 162-69.

<sup>2</sup>N. D. Labadie, in *Texas Almanac*, 1859, 44, *infra*, 310; also 279.

<sup>3</sup>This is Burnet's number (*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 58; *infra*, 329); Santa Anna was informed (*Verdadera Idea*, 81, *infra*, 266) that Baker had 150 men; while Baker himself (*infra*, 279) declares that his original company numbered only forty, but that volunteers joined him, increasing his force to eighty-five. After the enemy came up, Houston sent him additional reinforcements (See Yoakum, II, 493).

<sup>4</sup>This is Baker's number (*infra*, 280); Santa Anna calls it a "scant detachment" (*un corto destacamento*).

<sup>5</sup>Houston's reason for halting in such an out of the way place has never been satisfactorily explained; writing to Rusk on the 31st (in Yoakum, II, 487) he said, "I have the honor to report to you my arrival at this point, with a view to receive reinforcements and supplies. It is the best and nearest route to Harrisburg, or the Bay, at which I could have struck the Brazos, and it will prevent the whole country passing the Trinity." Captain R. J. Calder thought it was for purposes of discipline (*infra*, 336).

Bastrop upon San Felipe, and Urrea to march upon Brazoria, started five hundred men under Colonel Augustin Amat to reinforce Sesma, and leaving General Filisola at Gonzales, to take command of these and superintend their passage of the Guadalupe, pressed on to join Sesma himself.<sup>1</sup> This he did on the east bank of the Colorado, that general having just crossed at the Atascosita ford, and together they hastened after Houston to San Felipe, the ruins of which they reached April 7.<sup>2</sup> Finding the crossing here in possession of Baker's company, Santa Anna made a reconnoissance for several miles up and down the swollen river in the hope of discovering a ford where he might cross and surprise Baker by a night attack. But failing in this, he ordered the construction of two large flat-boats, and then, too impatient to remain inactive while this was being done, for he desired to end the campaign before the rains rendered the country impassable, set out down the river with five hundred grenadiers and fifty cavalry, looking for more expeditious means of crossing.<sup>3</sup> After three days he gained possession of the ferry at Fort Bend,<sup>4</sup> and was joined on the 13th by Sesma, who had been awaiting in vain at San Felipe the arrival of Gaona and Filisola.

Here Santa Anna learned that the seat of government was only twelve leagues distant and unprotected, and that by a rapid march

<sup>1</sup>*Verdadera Idea*, 79-81.

<sup>2</sup>Moseley Baker had set fire to the town in the afternoon of the 29th, upon a report from his scouts that the enemy were approaching. In 1838 Baker declared under oath that this was done in accordance with Houston's written order (*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 59; *infra*, 329); but the latter always denied it. Even as early as March 31, 1836, writing to Rusk (in Yoakum, II, 487-88), he says, "Two nights since, when it was reported that the enemy were on this side of the Colorado, the citizens of San Felipe reduced it to ashes. There was no order from me for it." He adds, however, "I am glad of it, should the enemy march there."

<sup>3</sup>*Verdadera Idea*, 83; *infra*, 267.

<sup>4</sup>"*A pesar de los esfuerzos de un corto destacamento enemigo que lo defendia.*" One Texan story goes that the Mexicans came to the ford and spoke English, whereupon a boat was sent over to them which they seized (*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 23). But, in fact, they captured a skiff in which a negro had stolen across, and passing a sufficient number of men over in this, surprised the Texans and drove them away from the ferry.

he might succeed in capturing the President and all his cabinet, among them his old enemy, Lorenzo de Zavala. Abandoning, therefore, what was perhaps his original plan of pursuing Houston and forcing a battle near Groce's,<sup>1</sup> he left Sesma with a part of his division, and sealed instructions to Filisola when he should come up, and with the rest of Sesma's force—seven hundred infantry, fifty cavalry, and a six pound cannon—hastened on towards Harrisburg. Reaching that place during the night of April 15th, the Mexicans found it abandoned, and only three printers captured in the office of the *Telegraph and Texas Register* informed them that the officers of the government had departed that morning for Galveston Island, and that Houston was at Groce's with eight hundred men. A reconnoitering party sent out towards Lynchburg reported that settlers in that direction uniformly declared that Houston intended retreating to the Trinity by way of Lynch's Ferry, and Santa Anna, by his own account, formed the plan of intercepting him there. Ordering Filisola, who had now come up with Sesma, to reinforce him with five hundred picked infantry (*infantes escogidos*), he set fire to Harrisburg<sup>2</sup> and pushed on to overtake his scouts at New Washington—having sent them there, it would seem, for purposes of plunder.

In marked contrast with the impetuosity of Santa Anna was Houston's long delay in the bottom opposite Groce's. He sought to employ his leisure in the better organization of his forces; a new regiment was formed with Sidney Sherman as its colonel, and numerous promotions were made in consequence. A medical staff also was created, and specific duties assigned to each of the six or eight physicians with the army. But the troops looked askance at the non-combative policy of their commander, and, so far from discipline's being promoted by these changes and the long halt, almost open mutiny was the result. The belief became general, in fact, that Houston desired to avoid a conflict altogether, and that his

<sup>1</sup>*Verdadera Idea*, 83—" \* \* \* nada mas conveniente que perseguirlo y batirlo, antes de que pudiera reponerse."

<sup>2</sup>Santa Anna declares the town was already burning when he arrived, and that the printers told him it had caught by accident (*Verdadera Idea*, 84; but see Delgado's account (*infra*, 289).

only movement from the Brazos would be to continue the retreat eastward—most likely towards Nacogdoches. Such a contingency was freely discussed, and officers and men alike boldly canvassed the advisability of electing a more aggressive leader.<sup>1</sup> The civil authorities, too, became uneasy at the continued inactivity of the army, and began to urge General Houston to bestir himself. General Rusk, the Secretary of War, was sent to the field in the hope of inaugurating a more vigorous policy, and President Burnet attempted to sting the commander into action by the information that he was becoming the laughing stock of the enemy, and that the salvation of Texas depended upon his fighting.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the general dissatisfaction, however, the army was gradually reinforced to almost its size on the Colorado.<sup>3</sup> General Rusk arrived on the 4th, and in consultation with Houston on the night of the 11th it was decided to cross to the east side of the river. This operation—rendered very tedious on account of the absence of a ferry boat and the presence of several wagons with their ox teams and some two hundred horses—was completed by means of the steam tug Yellowstone on the 13th, before which time Houston was apprised of the passage of the river by the enemy at Fort Bend.<sup>4</sup> Orders had already been issued to the scattered detachments at San Felipe, Fort Bend, and Washington to join the main army at Donoho's, a few miles east of Groce's, and thither Houston took his way in the afternoon of the 14th, the difficulties of his march being increased by the addition to his train on the 11th of the "Twin

<sup>1</sup>*Infra*, 282, 302, 311, 331.

<sup>2</sup>*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 59-60; *infra*, 330.

<sup>3</sup>Rusk to Burnet, April 6, 1836 (Copy),—Archives of Texas; *Proclamation* of President Burnet, April 6, 1836 (MS. copy),—Archives of Texas.

Rusk says: "I find the army in fine spirits, ready and anxious to measure arms with the enemy; the army are about fifteen hundred strong, though not all at this point. Some are at San Felipe, and I doubt not you have, before this, heard of Captain Wily Martin being stationed with a small force at Fort Bend." Burnet says: "Houston now has an army of fifteen hundred men on the west side of the Brazos." Houston himself declared (Houston to Thomas, April 13, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 496-97) that his total force in camp on the 11th was only 523 men.

<sup>4</sup>Houston to Thomas, April 13, 1836, in Yoakum, II, 496-97.

Sisters," two six pound cannon presented to Texas by the people of Cincinnati.

At Donoho's Baker and Martin came up, both of the opinion that this was only another subterfuge of the commander-in-chief's to avoid the enemy, and very much disgusted. The latter, according to Houston's account, refused to fall into line with his company, and was ordered to hasten to Robbins' Ferry on the Trinity to protect the families crossing there from the Indians.<sup>1</sup> The whole army, in fact, was in doubt of Houston's plan, and the belief was quite common that he intended falling back as far as Nacogdoches; in which case the general sentiment favored the election of a new leader.<sup>2</sup> The road to Harrisburg diverged from the one to Nacog-

<sup>1</sup>*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 24, *infra*, 321. Yoakum, Bancroft and Brown all follow this account; but Dr. Labadie (*infra*, 312) gives another version. He says that Martin reported at Donoho's alone, explaining that his company had disbanded to look after their own families, in the belief that Houston intended retiring to Nacogdoches. This seems the more likely, for Martin, who was anxious to fight, would scarcely have been willing to turn aside to the Trinity, when he knew the enemy had gone in the direction of Harrisburg. Moseley Baker, however, writing in 1844, said that after the battle of San Jacinto "Wiley Martin's company was within fifty miles."

<sup>2</sup>*Infra*, 302, 312.

Colonel R. M. Coleman says (*Houston Displayed*—Pamphlet in the Austin Papers) he informed Houston that, "an attempt to take the left hand road at Roberts' would \* \* \* result in the disorganization of the army; that another would be called to the command." Houston's correspondence while in camp at Groce's, however, does not indicate that he thought of further retreat to any other point than Harrisburg: writing to General Rusk on March 31st (in Yoakum, II, 487), he says, "I have the honor to report to you my arrival at this point, \* \* \*. It is the best and nearest route to Harrisburg, or the Bay, at which I could have struck the Brazos." To David Thomas he wrote on April 13th (in Yoakum, II, 496-97): "I would at once have fallen back on Harrisburg, but a wish to allay the panic that prevailed, induced me to stop at the Brazos, contrary to my views of military operations." And on the same day he wrote to Colonel Nathaniel Robbins (in Yoakum, II, 497-98): "You are hereby ordered and commanded to seize all arms and guns \* \* \* as may be useful to the army, \* \* \* holding them subject to the orders of the government. You will arrest all *deserters* from the army, and pass them over to commands on their march to the army." Though this letter does not show where Colonel Robbins was located, Labadie tells us (*Texas*

doches a short distance from McCurley's, some fifteen miles east of Donoho's,<sup>1</sup> and it was felt that here the die would be cast. There was probably considerable relief among the men, therefore, when, instead of an attempt to lead them towards Nacogdoches, they were allowed without opposition to keep the road to Harrisburg.<sup>2</sup>

The hypothesis that Houston's plan was to retreat to Nacogdoches, or perhaps to the Sabine, had at this time probably little to support it beyond his apparent reluctance to face the enemy, and the known fact that there was a large body of United States troops at Fort Jessup, near Natchitoches in Louisiana, whose protection from both Mexicans and Indians many relied upon, in case the worst came, and Texas had to be temporarily abandoned. But subsequent knowledge of the sympathy of General Gaines, who commanded these troops, and of the attitude of President Jackson towards the Texas question has, it is sometimes fondly contended, clearly proved that Houston's purpose throughout the campaign was to draw Santa Anna to the Sabine, where it was hoped that he might inadvertently offer General Gaines an excuse for taking up the war and establishing a protectorate of the United States over Texas.<sup>3</sup>

*Almanac*, 1859, 46) that he was on the Trinity at the ferry bearing his name; the inference seems plain, therefore, that Houston did not intend passing that point. And finally, the settlers around New Washington told Almonte that Houston was going to retire to the Trinity by way of Lynchburg (*infra*, 268).

<sup>1</sup>*Infra*, 302, 312.

<sup>2</sup>Houston, Kuykendall, and Labadie (*infra*, 321, 302, 313) agree that the army took the Harrisburg road without any orders being given; Calder (*infra*, 336) thinks they were commanded to take the Harrisburg road; while Coleman and others claim that Houston was ordered to Harrisburg by General Rusk.

<sup>3</sup>*Texas Almanac*, 1860, 61-62; *infra*, 331-32; Anson Jones: *Republic of Texas*, 83.

President Jackson's private position in regard to Texas four years earlier may be gathered from the following extract (Jackson to Butler, February 25, 1832,—Austin Papers). Having heard an erroneous report of an insurrection in Texas early in 1832, he wrote to Anthony Butler, United States



As a matter of fact, some negotiations were made to enlist the support of these forces; but they were made by the civil government and the citizens of Nacogdoches, and it is doubtful whether Houston at the time knew anything about them.<sup>1</sup> The following letter from the Secretary of State, Sam P. Carson,<sup>2</sup> gives the first suggestion of these overtures:

*"His Excellency David G. Burnet.*<sup>3</sup>

"12 o'clock. *News—good news.*

"I have just heard through a source in which Judge Hardin has confidence that a company or battalion of U. S. troops left Fort Jessup eight or ten days since, crossed the Sabine and were marching towards the Neschies. *I* believe it to be true. Gen. Gaines is there and doubtless my letter by Parmer had the desired effect. Jackson will protect the neutral ground, and the beauty of it is, he claims to the Neschies as neutral ground. I should like his protection that far at present. If we are successful, we can hereafter negotiate and regulate boundaries. This news, just arrived, has infused new life into people here, and be assured I will keep the ball rolling. \* \* \*

"CARSON."

Chargé d'Affaires in Mexico: " \* \* \* The present resources of Mexico will not be competent to reconquer and put down this insurrection and regain the country, if once lost, and a government composed of all kindred and tongues on our border, plundering and murdering our good citizens at will, and exciting the Indians to make war upon us, and on our borders,—this may compel us, in self-defense, to seize that country by force and establish a regular government *there* over it. \* \* \* Therefore it is we want to obtain a cession of that country for a fair consideration, to prevent this very unpleasant emergency *that would* compel us to seize that country on principles of real necessity, and self-defense, *being* well aware that Mexico cannot prevent Texas becoming independent of her. \* \* \*" It has even been charged (Robert Mayo: *Political Sketches of Eight Years in Washington*, 117-29) that Houston came to Texas, after a semi-official understanding with Jackson in 1830, to stir up a rebellion and either found an independent republic or enable the United States to seize the territory. And strange to say, this wild story is credited by both Parton (*Life of Andrew Jackson*, III, 654-57) and Sumner (*Andrew Jackson*, 354).

<sup>1</sup>See *infra*, 255, note 3.

<sup>2</sup>Yoakum (II, 118) miscalls him Secretary of the Navy.

<sup>3</sup>Copy (no date)—Archives of Texas.

The letter bears no date, but was certainly written in the earlier part of April, probably on the 4th.<sup>1</sup>

By way, as he would perhaps have expressed it, of "keeping the ball rolling," Carson pushed on to Fort Jessup—officially, it is presumed, since he was still Secretary of State—and tried the efficacy of a personal appeal to General Gaines. His formal report to the President and cabinet gives the result of the interview, together with some other interesting information:

"NACHITOCHES, April 14, 1836.

*"To his Excellency David G. Burnet and the Cabinet of the Republic of Texas."*<sup>2</sup>

"GENTLEMEN: On my arrival here last night I met with Gen'l Gaines and have had with him a full and *satisfactory* conversation. His position at present is a delicate one, and requires at his hands the most cautious movements. The object of the concentration of forces at Jessup is to protect the frontier and neutral ground, also to keep the Indians in check and repress savage aggressions. This he is bound to do in fulfillment of treaty stipulations between the government of the United States and Mexico. \* \* \* Gen'l Gaines \* \* \* issued an order to prepare thirteen companies to march this evening to the Sabine, with two field pieces with seventy-five rounds for each and thirty-five rounds for the infantry—also twelve days provisions, etc.

"I herewith send you a copy of his requisition upon the government of Louisiana to furnish a brigade of mounted volunteers:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>On April 4th, Carson wrote to Burnet from Liberty (copy in the Archives of Texas) saying: " \* \* \* Never till I reached Trinity did I despond, I will not yet say I *despair*. If Houston has retreated or been whipped, nothing can save the people from themselves. \* \* \* If Houston retreats, the flying people must be covered in their escape [Yoakum, II, 119, misquotes this: "may be covered," etc.]. \* \* \* Nothing can stop the people unless Houston is successful. \* \* \*" I think it likely that the letter above was a postscript to this; at any rate, his reference to Judge Hardin shows that it was written while he was still at Liberty, and as we shall soon see, he was at Fort Jessup by the 13th.

<sup>2</sup>Copy—Archives of Texas.

<sup>3</sup>The requisition (MS. copy in Archives of Texas), dated April 8th, asked Governor White, of Louisiana, for two or three battalions of volunteers,—

a similar request has been made to the governors of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, requiring, however, only a battalion of the latter in consequence of the Florida war. He will have in a few days (say 20 or 30) from 7 to 8,000 men with him. You will perceive that we *cannot use Indian auxiliaries* unless in *self defense*. The treaty referred to requires the United States to put such conduct down. \* \* \*

"I cannot state positively what Gen'l Gaines may do, but one thing I think I may say, that should he be satisfied of the fact that the Mexicans have incited *any Indians*, who are under the control of the United States, to commit depredations on *either* side of the line, he will doubtless view it as a violation of the treaty referred to, \* \* \* and be assured that he will maintain the honor of his country and punish the aggressor, be he who he may. Now the *fact is* that the Mexicans have already with them a number of the Caddoes, some Cherokees, and Indians of other tribes which are under the protection and control of the United States. It is only necessary then to *satisfy* Gen'l Gaines of the fact, in which case, be assured he will act with energy and efficiency. The proofs will, I have no doubt, be abundant by the time he reaches the Sabine; in which case he will cross and move upon the aggressors. \* \* \*

"Yours,

"SAM P. CARSON."

"P. S. I have written Gen'l Houston and requested him to forward the communication to you."

General Gaines did, indeed—upon information furnished him mainly, however, by the Committee of Safety and private citizens of Nacogdoches—advance to the Sabine with thirteen companies; but finding there that the Indians had killed but one man, and that not in such a manner as to indicate a "*spirit of general hostility* towards the inhabitants," he contented himself with halting on the

as many to be mounted as possible,—stating that General Gaines had been informed upon reliable authority that many United States Indians had gone over to the Texas side; that he feared an Indian war, knowing that it would extend to both sides of the boundary; that he intended to advance into Texas and make the Indians return to their reservations; and, finally, that he asked troops of Governor White, because he had not time to await reinforcements and instructions from the President.

left bank of the river and sending a warning message to the Cherokee chief Bowles.<sup>1</sup> That he was in eager sympathy with the Texans and was possessed of an almost feverish desire to help them is certain, but the simultaneous reports that Santa Anna had been defeated and captured at San Jacinto and that "the Cherokee and other Indians in Texas from our side of the national boundary-line are disposed to return to their villages, plant corn, and be peaceable,"<sup>2</sup> relieved him alike of the necessity and the pretext. Nevertheless, he remained encamped on the Sabine until the fall of 1836, keeping a vigilant eye upon Texas, and bristling at every fresh rumor of renewed aggressiveness on the part of Mexico.

Whether Houston ever received Carson's letter, informing him of the movements of General Gaines is questionable.<sup>3</sup> At any rate,—either voluntarily or constrained by the mutinous sentiment of his troops—he proceeded to Harrisburg, arriving opposite its site in the forenoon of the 18th. The Texans rested here until the following morning, and during their halt two couriers were captured, bearing dispatches from Filisola and the Mexican government to Santa Anna, from which Houston first definitely learned that the latter was leading the troops to the east of him.

On the morning of the 19th both Houston and Rusk made encouraging addresses to the soldiers, declaring that they were now going to fall upon the enemy, and urging them to avenge their comrades of the Alamo and Goliad. After leaving in camp here his baggage train and some hundred and fifty or two hundred sick and inefficient, with seventy-five men under Major McNutt to guard them,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gaines to Secretary of War, April 20, 1836, in *House Exec. Doc. 351, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess.*, pp. 771-73.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 783.

<sup>3</sup>So far as I know, Houston never mentioned the receipt of it, though in later controversies he might have used it to good effect. The inference must follow that either it never came into his hands, or that having it, he still preferred, as a matter of policy, to tacitly disclaim any knowledge whatever of General Gaines's operations.

<sup>4</sup>I follow here the account of J. H. Kuykendall (*infra*, 303, note), who was a member of the guard; W. P. Zuber, also a member of the guard,

Houston marched down the left bank of Buffalo bayou, and crossing below the mouth of Sims's bayou, pressed on across Vince's bridge towards the San Jacinto. The march was kept up till nearly midnight, when the exhausted men were allowed to rest for a few hours. At daybreak, however, they were again put in motion, and when, about six o'clock, a halt was made for breakfast and the scouts came galloping up and reported that they had discovered the advance guard of the enemy returning from New Washington, the half-cooked food was bolted down and a hurried march continued to Lynch's Ferry, where they arrived early in the forenoon.

Almost immediately upon their arrival at the ferry, the enemy's advance guard was seen approaching, and the Texans fell back about half a mile, to establish themselves in a live-oak grove on the bank of the bayou. In front of them, and extending to the right towards Vince's bayou, was a prairie, perhaps two miles in width, bounded on the south by a marsh; to the left was the San Jacinto river; and at their back, Buffalo bayou.<sup>1</sup> Into this prairie the Mexicans soon filed from the direction of New Washington—which they had just burned—and formed their camp near the southern edge.

Early in the afternoon Santa Anna advanced his artillery—one six-pounder<sup>2</sup>—under cover of the cavalry, and fired a shot at the Texans, but this being immediately returned from the "Twin Sisters," the cannon was hastily withdrawn to the protection of a cluster of timber, from which it continued to be fired at intervals throughout the afternoon.<sup>3</sup> A few hours later, Colonel Sherman,

says (*Texas Almanac*, 1861, 59; *infra*, 339) the whole number in the camp, sick included, was about 200; R. M. Coleman says (*Houston Displayed*, 20): "About 300 men were left under the command of Major McNutt for the purpose of guarding the sick and the baggage." Labadie (*Texas Almanac*, 1859, 49) says: "Dr Phelps having been left to attend to some ten or twelve who were sick with the diarrhoea; the Red Land company, consisting of some forty men, also remaining to guard the camp." And Baneroft (II, 253, note 34) thinks Labadie's figures the most reasonable.

<sup>1</sup>Williams: *Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas*, 194-95.

<sup>2</sup>This is the Mexican account; Houston—and most Texan writers after him—calls it a twelve-pounder. Calder believes it was a nine-pounder.

<sup>3</sup>Labadie: *Texas Almanac*, 1859, 51.

according to his own account, asked and obtained permission to advance with mounted volunteers and attempt to capture it.<sup>1</sup> But he got into a rather lively skirmish with the Mexican cavalry, creating a good deal of excitement in the Texan camp thereby, and returned with two men seriously wounded, one of whom afterwards died. Nothing else of interest occurred during the rest of the afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

On the morning of the 21st, General Cos arrived with some four hundred men, and increased Santa Anna's strength to eleven hundred and fifty or twelve hundred.<sup>3</sup> This gave the latter considera-

<sup>1</sup>*Defence of Gen. Sydney Sherman, etc.*, 5. Sherman's words are: "The enemy's only field piece was in sight from our camp, and had been annoying us during the day. Late in the evening, I proposed to General Houston to allow me to call for volunteers, and capture their gun. He consented, and proposed himself to order out Colonel Millard's regulars to support me, and gave orders to that effect." For Houston's version, see *infra*, 322.

<sup>2</sup>In the light of a subsequent event—the arrival of reinforcements to Santa Anna on the 21st—it would have been better for General Houston to fight the battle of San Jacinto on the 20th; but his delay was perhaps natural. The army had made forced marches from Harrisburg, had slept little the previous night, and the men were necessarily greatly fatigued; a complete rest for them, therefore, might well have been considered desirable. It is by no means certain, either, that, as has been charged, the dispatches captured at Harrisburg gave the Texans definite information that Santa Anna was expecting reinforcements, though they did, perhaps, afford ground for suspecting it. Santa Anna says (*Verdadera Idea*, 92) the dispatches informed them of his presence in New Washington, of the number composing the section that was advancing by that route, and of the position of his other forces ("\* \* \* que yo me hallaba en New Washington, el número de que se componia la seccion que expedicionaba por aquel rumbo, y la situacion de nuestras otras fuerzas"). However, see *infra*, 304, 338.

<sup>3</sup>Texas historians generally, following Houston's official report of the battle of San Jacinto, place this number much higher, varying it from sixteen hundred down to thirteen hundred men. Houston says (Report, 3—published also in Brown, II, 18-23; Yoakum, II, 498-502; Kennedy, II, 222-27; and elsewhere) concerning the whole number of the enemy, Cos came up, "increasing their effective force to upwards of 1500 men"; and again, after the battle, he reports, "The enemy's loss was 630 killed \* \* \* wounded, 208, \* \* \* prisoners, 730." But all Mexican authority, accepted by Yoakum (II, 122) and Bancroft (II, 250), agrees that Santa Anna left Fort Bend with no more than 750 men,—though Brown (II, 11), counting, perhaps, Sesma's whole division, a part of which remained

ble advantage over Houston, who had but seven hundred and eighty-three men,<sup>1</sup> and the Texans became apprehensive that in consequence their general would again try to avoid a battle and continue the retreat across the San Jacinto. As time passed and no preparation was made to attack, their fears, they thought, were verified, and the old question of deposing the commander-in-chief was revived.<sup>2</sup>

Some time during the forenoon Deaf Smith left camp to destroy Vince's bridge<sup>3</sup>—not, as is quite popularly believed, for the purpose of making the approaching conflict a death struggle, but to obstruct the march of additional Mexican reinforcements.<sup>4</sup> And about midday Houston consented to a council of war in which it was decided to attack the enemy at daybreak the following morning; but this decision being rather sullenly received by the majority of the army, the question was submitted directly to them through their respective captains, and settled in favor of immediate attack.<sup>5</sup>

About three o'clock in the afternoon of April 21st, therefore, Houston gave the order to prepare for action. The line having

on the Brazos, says he "had with him between eleven and twelve hundred." And Texan writers almost uniformly put Cos's reinforcements at 500 about 100 of whom, as we know from both Mexican (*Verdadera Idea*, 87; Filisola: *Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas*, II, 473) and Texan authority (*infra*, 303) were left at Harrisburg. Houston himself, unless he counted the wounded twice, disposed of only 1,360, and it is well established that scarcely 40 escaped.

<sup>1</sup>Houston's Report, 3.

<sup>2</sup>Labadie, Baker (*infra*, 285, 315) ; *Houston Displayed*, 25-26.

<sup>3</sup>Bitter controversy wages over this point; Houston and his adherents maintaining that the plan originated with him, while others assert that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was induced to give it his consent.

<sup>4</sup>The whole episode of Vince's bridge has received an emphasis from the historians which is probably far beyond its real importance. The bayou does not exceed three miles in length, and could have been "headed" by either reinforcements or fugitives with the loss of but a few hours at the most.

<sup>5</sup>*Infra*, 316, 324, 337.

been formed, an advance was made upon the enemy which took them almost completely by surprise, most of the officers—Santa Anna included—being asleep. The Mexicans made one confused effort to sustain the charge, then broke and fled in utter panic. The Texans pursuing, the rout became a slaughter which only stopped at nightfall,—though the battle proper lasted perhaps not more than thirty minutes. Practically the entire Mexican force was either killed or captured, and of the Texans, two were killed and twenty-three wounded—six mortally.<sup>1</sup> The following day Santa Anna was captured and brought into camp, when an armistice was arranged between him and Houston providing for a cessation of hostilities until a permanent peace could be negotiated. And in the meantime Filisola was to fall back from Fort Bend to San Antonio, and cause Urrea to do the same from Victoria.

From San Jacinto Santa Anna was taken with the other prisoners to Velasco, and there on May 14 the treaty of that name was arranged between himself and the government of Texas. The public treaty provided, among other things, for a cessation of hostilities; the immediate withdrawal of the Mexican forces beyond the Rio Grande; the restoration of property taken by the Mexicans; and, finally, that the Texan army should not approach nearer than five leagues to the retreating Mexicans. At the same time a secret agreement was made with the captive dictator in which the government promised, in return for his solemn pledge to use his influence in securing an acknowledgment of Texan independence, to immediately liberate him and send him to Vera Cruz.<sup>2</sup>

On May 26th, General Filisola ratified the public treaty and fulfilled its provisions by abandoning Texas; but through the interference of the enraged army the Texan government was compelled to break the secret articles, and Santa Anna was detained a prisoner until late in 1836, when he was sent to Washington, D. C. Quite naturally he felt himself absolved from his promise to labor for Texan independence. And though this was practically established

<sup>1</sup>Houston's Report (*infra*, 263). For additional accounts of the battle, both Texan and Mexican, see *infra*, 270-71; 290-91; 340-43.

<sup>2</sup>Both treaties are published in full in Yoakum, II, 526-28; and Brown, II, 62-65. The public treaty is also published in Kennedy, II, 233-35; and Foote, II, 318-20.



by the battle of San Jacinto, it was not until the settlement of the Mexican War by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 that Mexico formally renounced her claims to Texas.

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DOCUMENTARY SELECTIONS RELATIVE TO THE CAMPAIGN.

I.

*Houston's Report of the Battle.*

[The original of this report has been lost, but numerous copies of it have been published. The first was issued in pamphlet form from New Orleans in 1836. Other copies may be found in Kennedy, II, 222-27; Yoakum, II, 498-502; Brown, II, 18-23; Dewees's *Letters from Texas*, 194-200; Linn's *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 203-9; and probably elsewhere. A Spanish translation occurs in Caro's *Verdadera Idea*, 106-13.]

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,  
SAN JACINTO, April 25, 1836.

*To His Excellency David G. Burnet, President of the Republic of Texas.*

SIR: I regret extremely that my situation, since the battle of the 21st, has been such as to prevent my rendering you my official report of the same, previous to this time.

I have the honor to inform you, that on the evening of the 18th inst., after a forced march of fifty-five miles, which was effected in two days and a half, the army arrived opposite Harrisburg. That evening a courier of the enemy was taken, from whom I learned that General Santa Anna, with one division of choice troops, had marched in the direction of Lynch's ferry on the San Jacinto, burning Harrisburg as he passed down. The army was ordered to be in readiness to march early on the next morning. The main body effected a crossing over Buffalo bayou, below Harrisburg, on the morning of the 19th, having left the baggage, the sick, and a sufficient camp guard in the rear. We continued the march throughout the night, making but one halt in the prairie for a short time, and without refreshments. At daylight we resumed the line of march, and in a short distance our scouts encountered those of the enemy, and we received information that General Santa Anna was at New

Washington, and would that day take up the line of march for Anahuac, crossing at Lynch's Ferry. The Texian army halted within half a mile of the ferry in some timber and were engaged in slaughtering beeves, when the army of Santa Anna was discovered to be approaching in battle array, having been encamped at Clopper's point, eight miles below. Disposition was immediately made of our forces, and preparation for his reception. He took position with his infantry and artillery in the center, occupying an island of timber, his cavalry covering the left flank. The artillery, consisting of one double fortified medium brass twelve-pounder, then opened on our encampment. The infantry, in column, advanced with the design of charging our lines, but were repulsed by a discharge of grape and canister from our artillery, consisting of two six-pounders. The enemy had occupied a piece of timber within rifle shot of the left wing of our army, from which an occasional interchange of small arms took place between the troops, until the enemy withdrew to a position on the bank of the San Jacinto, about three-quarters of a mile from our encampment, and commenced fortifications. A short time before sunset, our mounted men, about eighty-five in number, under the special command of Colonel Sherman, marched out for the purpose of reconnoitering the enemy. Whilst advancing they received a volley from the left of the enemy's infantry, and after a sharp rencounter with their cavalry, in which ours acted extremely well and performed some feats of daring chivalry, they retired in good order, having had two men severely wounded and several horses killed. In the meantime, the infantry under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Millard, and Colonel Burleson's regiment with the artillery, had marched out for the purpose of covering the retreat of the cavalry, if necessary. All then fell back in good order to our encampment about sunset, and remained without any ostensible action until the 21st, at half past three o'clock, taking the first refreshment that they had enjoyed for two days. The enemy in the meantime extended the right flank of their infantry so as to occupy the extreme point of a skirt of timber on the bank of the San Jacinto, and secured their left by a fortification about five feet high, constructed of packs and baggage, leaving an opening in the center of the breastwork in which their artillery was placed, their cavalry upon their left wing.

About nine o'clock on the morning of the 21st, the enemy were

reinforced by 500 choice troops, under the command of General Cos, increasing their effective force to upwards of 1,500 men, whilst our aggregate force for the field numbered 783. At half past three o'clock in the evening, I ordered the officers of the Texian army to parade their respective commands, having in the meantime ordered the bridge on the only road communicating with the Brazos, distant eight miles from our encampment, to be destroyed, thus cutting off all possibility of escape. Our troops paraded with alacrity and spirit, and were anxious for the contest. Their conscious disparity in numbers seemed only to increase their enthusiasm and confidence and heighten their anxiety for the conflict. Our situation afforded me the opportunity for making the arrangements preparatory to the attack, without exposing our designs to the enemy. The first regiment, commanded by Colonel Burleson, was assigned the center. The second regiment, under the command of Colonel Sherman, formed the left wing of the army. The artillery under the special command of Colonel George W. Hockley, Inspector-General, was placed on the right of the first regiment; and four companies of infantry, under the command of Lieut.-Col. Henry Millard, sustained the artillery upon the right. Our cavalry, sixty-one in number, commanded by Colonel Mirabeau B. Lamar, whose gallant and daring conduct on the previous day had attracted the admiration of his comrades and called him to that station, placed on our extreme right, completed our line. Our cavalry was first dispatched to the front of the enemy's left, for the purpose of attracting their notice, whilst an extensive island of timber afforded us an opportunity of concentrating our forces and deploying from that point, agreeably to the previous design of the troops. Every evolution was performed with alacrity, the whole advancing rapidly in line and through an open prairie, without any protection whatever for our men. The artillery advanced and took station within two hundred yards of the enemy's breastwork, and commenced an effective fire with grape and canister.

Colonel Sherman with his regiment, having commenced the action upon our left wing, the whole line at the center and on the right, advancing in double-quick time, rung the war cry, "Remember the Alamo!" received the enemy's fire and advanced within point blank shot before a piece was discharged from our lines. Our

lines advanced without a halt, until they were in possession of the woodland and the breastwork, the right wing of Burleson's and the left of Millard's taking possession of the breastwork; our artillery having gallantly charged up within seventy yards of the enemy's cannon, when it was taken by our troops. The conflict lasted about eighteen minutes from the time of close action until we were in possession of the enemy's encampment, taking one piece of cannon (loaded), four stands of colors, all their camp equipage, stores and baggage. Our cavalry had charged and routed that of the enemy upon the right, and given pursuit to the fugitives, which did not cease until they arrived at the bridge which I have mentioned before, Captain Karnes, always among the foremost in danger, commanding the pursuers. The conflict in the breastwork lasted but a few moments; many of the troops encountered hand to hand, and not having the advantage of bayonets on our side, our riflemen used pieces as war clubs, breaking many of them off at the breech. The rout commenced at half past four, and the pursuit by the main army continued until twilight. A guard was then left in charge of the enemy's encampment, and our army returned with their killed and wounded. In the battle our loss was two killed and twenty-three wounded, six of them mortally. The enemy's loss was 630 killed, among whom was one general officer, four colonels, two lieutenant-colonels, five captains, twelve lieutenants. Wounded: 208, of which were: five colonels, three lieutenant-colonels, two second lieutenant-colonels, seven captains, one cadet. Prisoners, 730; President-General Santa Anna, General Cos, four colonels, aides to General Santa Anna, and the colonel of the Guerrero battalion are included in the number. General Santa Anna was not taken until the 22nd, and General Cos on yesterday, very few having escaped.

About six hundred muskets, three hundred sabres and two hundred pistols have been collected since the action. Several hundred mules and horses were taken, and near twelve thousand dollars in specie. For several days previous to the action our troops were engaged in forced marches, exposed to excessive rains, and the additional inconvenience of extremely bad roads, illy supplied with rations and clothing; yet, amid every difficulty, they bore up with cheerfulness and fortitude, and performed their marches with spirit and alacrity. There was no murmuring.

Previous to and during the action, my staff evinced every disposition to be useful, and were actively engaged in their duties. In the conflict I am assured they demeaned themselves in such manner as proved them worthy members of the Army of San Jacinto. Colonel Thos. J. Rusk, Secretary of War, was on the field. For weeks his services had been highly beneficial to the army; in battle he was on the left wing, where Colonel Sherman's command first encountered and drove the enemy. He bore himself gallantly, and continued his efforts and activity, remaining with the pursuers until resistance ceased.

I have the honor of transmitting herewith a list of all the officers and men who were engaged in the action, which I respectfully request may be published as an act of justice to the individuals. For the commanding General to attempt discrimination as to the conduct of those who commanded in the action, or those who were commanded, would be impossible. Our success in the action is conclusive proof of such daring intrepidity and courage; every officer and man proved himself worthy of the cause in which he battled, while the triumph received a lustre from the humanity which characterized their conduct after victory, and richly entitles them to the admiration and gratitude of their general. Nor should we withhold the tribute of our grateful thanks from that Being who rules the destinies of nations, and has in the time of greatest need enabled us to arrest a powerful invader, whilst devastating our country.

I have the honor to be, with high consideration,

Your obedient servant,

SAM HOUSTON, Commander-in-Chief.

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## II.

### *Extract from Santa Anna's Report.*

[Santa Anna's report of the San Jacinto campaign to the Minister of War and Marine is dated March 11, 1837. The copy from which this is translated is published in Ramon Caro's *Verdadera Idea de la Primera Campaña de Tejas*, 78-106. An almost complete copy may also be found in Filisola's *Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas*, II, 453-70. Though extracts of the report have from time to time been translated, no

complete translation has ever appeared, I believe; nor is this one complete. The greater part of what follows (the amount being indicated by a footnote) was furnished me by Miss Shirley R. Green, of Palestine, Texas; the remainder is taken from Maillard's *History of the Republic of Texas*, 107-111.

Describing the campaign from the Mexican point of view, Santa Anna has this to say upon two disputed questions:

A Texan soldier captured at San Felipe declared that the town had been burned by order of General Houston.

At Harrisburg he was told that Houston would retire to the Trinity by way of Lynchburg, and he determined to intercept him.]

\* \* \* On the third day I overtook on the Guadalupe river, across from the burnt village of Gonzales, the battalions of engineers and sappers from Guadalajara, which, under the command of Colonel Agustin Amat, were marching to reinforce General Ramirez y Sesma's division.

Two days' march to the rear Lieutenant-Colonel Pedro Ampudia followed with the artillery, implements and tools, knapsacks (*sacos a tierra*), ammunition and supplies for the same division.

As the Guadalupe was swollen, it was not possible that the troops and train referred to should cross the river with the necessary dispatch, a delay of three or four days being imperative. \* \* \* I hastened my march, and on the fifth day arrived at Atascocita ford on said river [Colorado]. I met on the other side the division of General Ramirez y Sesma, and he informed me that the enemy having retired toward the Brazos, a chance had been given him to cross without opposition; and observing that there was only one canoe, I recommended to the permanent battalion of Aldama, under command of General Adrian Woll, the construction of rafts in order to facilitate the march of the section left with General Filisola. Believing General Gaona to be on the march toward San Felipe de Austin, according to his answer from Bastrop, a town located on the east bank of the Colorado, 30 leagues to the west of San Felipe de Austin, and General Urrea towards Brazoria, located on the west bank of the Brazos river, and twenty-five leagues to the south of the said San Felipe, I continued on the sixth with the division of General Sesma as far as the San Bernard creek, and at daybreak on the seventh arrived at San Felipe de Austin. This town, situated on the west bank of the Brazos, no longer existed, because the enemy had burned it and sent the inhabitants into the

interior, as at Gonzales. An armed Anglo-American was captured among the ruins and he declared: *that he belonged to a detachment of 150 men, located on the other side of the river for the purpose of defending the ford; that the towns were burned by the order of their general, Samuel Houston, in order to cut the Mexicans off from supplies; that Houston was to be found in a thicket near the crossing of the Gross [Groce's] 15 leagues<sup>1</sup> distant on our left with only 800 men remaining to him; and that his intention was to retire to the Trinity river, in case the Mexicans crossed the Brazos.*

Our troops, seen at a distance by the detachment mentioned, were fired upon from a redoubt. \* \* \* I immediately reconnoitered the bank of the river, right and left, for two leagues, hunting a ford by which to make a surprise by night, but all effort was fruitless. The breadth and depth of the river are great, it was swollen, and not even a small canoe was to be found. The various rivers which traverse that country present great obstacles to an invading army: they are full, and have frequent freshets in the spring, caused by the melted snows from the mountains.<sup>2</sup> \* \* \*

On the 8th I ordered the construction of two flat bottomed boats, for which it was necessary to bring wood from distant points. Even after getting to work, ten or twelve days, it was estimated, would be necessary to complete them, because of the lack of carpenters; and three or four more to put them in condition for use. The loss of this time seemed to me an irreparable evil, the ending of the campaign before the rains being so important, in consideration of the condition of the army of the republic, as I shall soon be able to explain to the nation.

General Filisola did not arrive at the Colorado, and General Gaona, who was to join us, did not announce when he would do so. The condition of the hostile chief was not unknown to me. Intimidated by the successive triumphs of our army; terrified by the sight of rapid movements over ground, which by nature opposes obstacles almost insurmountable, and suffering desertion and want, which impelled him to seek safety by the retreat undertaken, nothing were easier than to follow and destroy him before he could recover himself.

<sup>1</sup>Really about fifteen miles.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>It is hardly necessary to say that this is an error.—E. C. B.

We were unable to cross the Brazos at San Felipe, and in view of such previous reasons, I resolved to make a reconnaissance for ten or twelve leagues along the right bank, whose side (*flanco*) I judged to be covered by General Urrea's division, which, as I have indicated, was directed upon Brazoria. To that end I marched from San Felipe on the 9th with 500 grenadiers and scouts and 50 horse, leaving General Ramirez y Sesma with the rest of his division, which could reinforce that of General Gaona at any time. After three days of laborious marching and countermarching, during one of which I made on foot a journey of five leagues, I got possession of the Thompson ford, in spite of the courage of a scant detachment of the enemy which defended it, and which succeeded in wounding only one grenadier and one bugler. By this extraordinary movement, unforeseen by the enemy, I came into possession of a good flat boat and two skiffs. \* \* \* General Ramirez y Sesma, according to my orders, joined me on the 13th. General Gaona did not appear.

Through some neighboring settlers, one of them a Mexican, I ascertained that in the village of Harrisburg, about twelve leagues distant, on the right bank of Buffalo bayou, there was located the so-called governor of Texas; Don Lorenzo Zavala; and the other leaders of the revolution, and that their capture would be certain if troops could be rapidly marched against them. The news was important. \* \* \* I sent across the river the grenadiers and sharpshooters (*Cazadores*), with whom I had taken the ford, together with the permanent battalion of Matamoras, the dragoons of my escort, a six-pound gun, and 50 boxes of musket cartridges, and undertook the march to Harrisburg with this force on the evening of the 14th. I left General Ramirez y Sesma at Thompson's with the rest of his division, and left sealed instructions for General Filisola.

At night on the 15th I entered Harrisburg, lighted by several burning houses, and found only a Frenchman and two Americans in a printing house. They said that *the so-called President, Vice-President, and other persons of authority had set out at midday in a steamboat for the island of Galveston; \* \* \* that the fire which we saw was accidental, they having been unable to extinguish it; that the families had abandoned their homes by the command of*



*General Houston; and that he was at the pass of Gross with 800 men, and two four-pound guns (del calibre de á cuatro).*

The capture of the leaders of the rebellion being frustrated, and knowing the rendezvous of the enemy, and his strength, in order the better to concert my succeeding movements, I ordered that Colonel Juan Almonte with the fifty dragoons of my escort reconnoiter as far as the pass of Lynchburg and New Washington. From the latter place the said colonel communicated to me, among other things, *that various settlers found in their houses had uniformly asserted that General Houston was retiring towards the Trinity by the pass of Lynchburg.*

To block this pass for Houston, and to destroy at one blow the armed strength and the hopes of the revolutionists, was too important a thing to let slip. It occurred to me to take the Lynchburg pass before his arrival, and to avail myself of the advantage in position. My first command was directed to reinforcing the section accompanying me, composed of 700 infantry, 50 horse, and one cannon, until it should be superior to the enemy in number, as it already was in discipline; and I ordered General Filisola to countermand the advance of General Cos towards Velasco, which I had advised in my instructions, and to send him to join me at the earliest moment with 500 *picked infantry.*

Colonel Almonte being engaged at the port of New Washington on the shore of Galveston Bay, [awaiting] the enemy's ships that might arrive, and it being at the same time necessary to secure the quantity of supplies that he had captured, I made a journey to that point on the afternoon of the 18th. On my arrival there I found in full view a schooner, which for lack of wind could not get away; I intended to seize it to make use of in due time on the Island of Galveston, but when the skiffs and flatboats, which Colonel Almonte had provided himself with, were made ready, a steamship arrived and opened fire upon him.<sup>1</sup>

Early on the morning of the 19th, I sent Captain Barragan, with some dragoons, to a point on the Lynchburg road, three leagues distant from New Washington, in order that he should watch and communicate to me, as speedily as possible, the arrival of Houston: and, on the 20th, at eight o'clock in the morning, he informed me

<sup>1</sup>Here ends Miss Green's translation; the balance is taken from Mailard's *History of the Republic of Texas*.—E. C. B.

that Houston had just got to Lynchburg. It was with the greatest joy that all the individuals belonging to the corps, then under my immediate orders, heard the news; and they continued the march, already begun, in the best spirit.

At my arrival, Houston was in possession of a wood on the margin of Buffalo bayou, which, at that point, empties itself into the San Jacinto creek. *His situation rendered it indispensable to fight*; and my troops manifested so much enthusiasm, that I immediately began the battle. Houston answered our firing, but refused to come out of the cover of the wood. I wished to draw him into a field of battle suited to my purpose, and in consequence withdrew about one thousand yards distance, to an eminence affording a favorable position, with abundance of water on my rear, a thick wood on my right, and a large plain on my left. Upon my executing this movement, the enemy's fire increased, particularly that of his artillery, by which Captain Fernando Urriza was wounded. About one hundred cavalry sallied out of the wood, and boldly attacked my escort, which was posted on the left, causing it to fall back for a few moments and wounding a dragoon. I commanded two companies of cazadores to attack them, and they succeeded in repelling them into the wood.

It was now five in the evening, and our troops wanted rest and refreshment, which I permitted them to take. Thus was the remainder of the day spent. We lay on our arms all night, during which I occupied myself in posting my forces to the best advantage, and procuring the construction of a parapet to cover the position of our cannon. I had posted three companies in the wood on our right, the permanent battalion of Matamoras formed our body of battle in the centre, and on our left was placed the cannon, protected by the cavalry, and a column of select companies (*de preferencia*), under the orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Santiago Luelmo, which composed the reserve.

On the 21st, at nine in the morning, General Cos arrived with four hundred men belonging to the battalions of Aldama, Guerrero, Toluca, and Guadalupe, having left one hundred men under the orders of Colonel Muriano Garcia, with their loads in a swampy place, near Harrisburg; and these never joined me. I then saw that my orders had been contravened; for I had asked five hundred select infantry, and they sent me raw recruits, who had joined the

army at San Louis Potosi and Saltillo. I was highly displeased with this act of disobedience, and considered the new reinforcement as trifling, whereas I had before its arrival entertained well-founded hopes of gaining some decisive advantage *with the new succor, which was to have given me the superiority of numbers.* I disposed myself, however, to take advantage of the favorable disposition which I perceived in our soldiers on the arrival of General Cos; but the latter represented to me that having made a forced march in order to reach my camp early, his troops had neither eaten nor slept during twenty-four hours, and that while the baggage was coming up, which it would do within two more hours, it was indispensable to grant some refreshment to the soldiers. I consented to it, but in order to keep a watch over the enemy and protect the said baggage, I posted my escort in a favorable place, reinforcing it with thirty-two infantry, mounted on officer's horses. Hardly one hour had elapsed since that operation, when General Cos begged me, in the name of Don Miguel Aguirre, the commander of the escort, that I would permit his soldiers to water their horses, which had not drunk for twenty-four hours, and let the men take some refreshment. Being moved by the pitiable tone in which this request was made, I consented, commanding at the time that Aguirre and his men should return to occupy their position as soon as they should have satisfied their necessities; and his disobedience to this order concurred to favor the surprise which the enemy effected.

Feeling myself exceedingly fatigued from having spent the whole morning on horseback, and the preceding night without sleep, I lay down under the shade of some trees, while the soldiers were preparing their meal. Calling General Castrillon, who acted as major-general, I recommended him to be watchful and to give me notice of the least movement of the enemy, and also to inform me when the repast of the soldiers would be over, because it was urgent to act in a decisive manner.

I was in a deep sleep when I was awakened by the firing and noise; I immediately perceived we were attacked, and had fallen into frightful disorder. The enemy had surprised our advance posts. One of their wings had driven away the three companies (*de preferencia*) posted in the wood on our right, and from among the trees were now doing much execution with their rifles.

The rest of the enemy's infantry attacked us in front with two pieces of cannon, and their cavalry did the same on our right.

Although the mischief was already done, I thought I could repair it, and with that view sent the battalion of Aldama to reinforce the line of battle formed by that of Matamoras, and organized a column of attack under the orders of Don Manuel Cespedes, composed of the permanent battalion of Guerrero, and the piquets of Toluca and Guadalajara, which moved to the front with the company of Lieutenant-Colonel Luelmo, in order to check the advance of the enemy; but my efforts were vain. The line was abandoned by the two battalions that were covering it; and notwithstanding the fire of our cannon, the two columns were thrown into disorder, Colonel Cespedes being wounded and Colonel Luelmo killed. General Castillon, who ran to and fro to re-establish order in our ranks, fell mortally wounded; and the new recruits threw everything into confusion, breaking their ranks and preventing the veterans from making use of their arms, whilst the enemy was rapidly advancing with loud hurrahs, and in a few minutes obtained a victory which they could not, some hours before, even have dreamed of.

All hopes being lost, and every one flying as fast as he could, I found myself in the greatest danger, when a servant of my aide-de-camp, Colonel Don Juan Bringas, offered me his horse, and with the tenderest and most urging expressions insisted upon my riding off the field. I looked for my escort, and two dragoons, who were hurriedly saddling their horses, told me that their officers and fellow-soldiers had all made their escape. I remembered that General Filisola was only seventeen leagues off, and I took my direction towards him, darting through the enemy's ranks. They pursued me, and after a ride of one league and a half, overtook me on the banks of a large creek, the bridge over which was burned by the enemy *to retard our pursuit*. I alighted from my horse and with much difficulty succeeded in concealing myself in a thicket of dwarf pines. Night coming on, I escaped them, and the hope of reaching the army gave me strength. I crossed the creek with the water up to my breast and continued my route on foot. I found, in a house which had been abandoned, some articles of clothing, which enabled me to change my apparel. At eleven o'clock, a. m., while I was crossing a large plain, my pursuers overtook me again. Such is the history of my capture. On account of my change of apparel, they

did not recognize me, and inquired whether I had seen Santa Anna? To this I answered that he had made his escape; and this answer saved me from assassination, as I have since been given to understand.

By what has been already explained Your Excellency will see at a glance the principal causes of an event which with good reason was a surprise. \* \* \*

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### III.

#### *Extracts from Moseley Baker's Letter to Houston.*<sup>1</sup>

[These extracts are taken *passim* from a manuscript copy of the letter made by A. D. Darden, and deposited by Mr. Bowers in the Texas State Library. Nothing is known of the original. Baker's motive is revealed in a sentence: "In my recent canvass for the Senate, you descended from your political elevation and engaged with warmth and zeal against me."

*Summary:* Houston took no part in bringing on the Texas revolution. Houston's force at Gonzales numbered 500 men.

In the panic of retreat from Gonzales, Houston threw two cannon into the Guadalupe and destroyed much baggage, because there was not sufficient time to collect the baggage animals which were grazing. For the same reason, the picket guard was left unnotified of the retreat (but see *infra*, 294, 318).

At Beason's, on the Colorado, Houston had from 1,500 to 1,700 men, and sent messengers through the country assuring the people that he intended "to whip the enemy on the Colorado." He delayed so long that both officers and men became mutinous in their desire to attack Sesma,

<sup>1</sup>The MS. is accompanied by the following explanatory letter from John M. Bowers: These pages on the history of Texas were written by Gen. Moseley Baker in the summer of 1844 at Evergreen, his plantation on Galveston Bay, and were at first intended for publication. Subsequent reasons prevented this, and in the spring of 1845 he gave the manuscript, together with a number of old newspapers and other documents, to Col., then Dr., Ashbel Smith. What became of these papers I do not know. A few years before Dr. Smith's death he sent the manuscript to Mrs. Fanny A. D. Darden, of this town, the only surviving child of Gen. Baker, and shortly before her death she gave it to me. I know it to have been written in 1844, as I was a near neighbor of the general's, and saw him write the greater portion of it.

(Signed)

JOHN M. BOWERS.

Columbus, Texas, 8th December, 1894.

on the opposite bank with 700 men. Houston finally promised to fight, but immediately retreated.

At San Felipe, threats were openly made to depose the commander-in-chief.

Moseley Baker refused to follow Houston up to Groce's, and the latter then ordered him to remain and guard San Felipe, and to burn it on the "approach of the enemy."

At Groce's Houston had "not more" than 1,300 men; Baker had 85 at San Felipe; and there were 100 at Fort Bend.

At Donoho's Houston told Baker that he was marching to Harrisburg by order of the Secretary of War, and that he did so against his own better judgment.

About 500 men left the army between the Brazos and Harrisburg.

Houston had 900 men at Harrisburg.

Deaf Smith originated the idea of burning Vince's bridge.

Houston was forced to a reluctant consent to fight the battle of San Jacinto by the refusal of his army to continue the retreat.

In the beginning of the engagement, before 100 Mexicans had been killed, Houston ordered a halt. Rusk took command, and continued the battle.]

EVERGREEN, October —.

*To Gen. Sam Houston.*

SIR: A regard for what I have considered the public interest has induced me for the last seven years, not only to overlook the numerous outrages I have sustained at your hands, but also in my public character at all times to appear as your friend and supporter.

\* \* \* That I now depart from my heretofore rule of action is attributable to yourself alone. In my recent canvass for the Senate, you descended from your political elevation and engaged with warmth and zeal against me. \* \* \*

The first time that I had an opportunity of forming your acquaintance was at Nacogdoches, in the month of August, 1835.

\* \* \* One of the charges that I have made against you and to which you except is that you took little or no part in the bringing about of the revolution of Texas, and that, although you had been a resident of Nacogdoches for three years, that you had not sufficient influence to give tone to public sentiment even in your own county. This charge is unquestionably true, and yet you have permitted the idea to go forth that you were a prominent actor in the commencement of the great struggle; and you hear yourself spoken of as the Patrick Henry of the revolution without contradicting by sign or by word the flagrant mistake.

\* \* \* I venture to assert that you never forgot how universal was the lamentation that Milam could not have lived to command the army of Texas. Had he lived the battle of San Jacinto would not have been fought, nor would a Mexican army ever have seen the eastern banks of the Guadalupe.

\* \* \* On your arrival at Gonzales you immediately assumed the command of the army. \* \* \* You marshaled your forces at Gonzales, and found yourself at the head of five hundred as brave men as ever shot the rifle, the most of whom had been in the Mexican and Indian fights of the country,—the victors of Concepcion and the Grass Fight, and the capturers of Santa Anna, men anxious for a fight and burning for an opportunity of revenging the fate of their fellow citizens at the Alamo. All eyes were now turned upon you, and all anxiously awaited the first movement of their new commander. No one doubted but that the order would be to cross the Guadalupe and fall upon Gen. Siesma, who was advancing upon us with only seven hundred men. So long had the men under your command been accustomed to whip the enemy, five, and often ten, to one, that the most enthusiastic delight existed when they found that they were about to have an opportunity of fighting them on even terms. But how astonished was that army when you ordered that at the hour of midnight a retreat would commence. \* \* \* With so many brave men under your command, and so many rallying from the settlements to your army, you had only to give the word and then Texian rifles, as they ever did before and ever since have done, would have rushed as the whirlwind over their pusillanimous foe. You had before you the bright example of John Austin, who, with 92 men, captured the strong fort of Velasco, garrisoned by 170 men, in open assault.<sup>1</sup> You had before you the example of Fannin, of Burleson, and of Milam. \* \* \* But \* \* \* you determined that your first military act should be a retreat. \* \* \*

But at the hour of midnight your retreat did commence, and commenced amid a scene ever disgraceful to Texian arms. You threw your only two pieces of cannon into the river; you caused many of your men to burn their tents and leave their baggage,

<sup>1</sup>Yoakum says (I, 204) that the Mexican force here was only 125 men, while that of the Texans was 112.—E. C. B.

because your order, given just before night, prevented them from finding their baggage animals; you left on post your open picket guard unnotified of your retreat; and as we passed the houses of Gonzales, our ears were met with the heart-rending shrieks of those females, who heretofore, confidently depending on Texian courage, had made no provision for a removal; and last, though not least, our way was lighted by the unnecessary and indefensible burning of Gonzales.<sup>1</sup> Such, sir, is a faint picture of your first military move. I will not renew your recollection by a further review of the horrors of that disgraceful night. Worn down in spirit and body, we reached, shortly before day, Peach creek, ten miles this side of Gonzales. Here your men confidently expected that you would make a stand, because on your retreat from Gonzales you said you would retreat to the *tall timbers*, and no one for a moment thought that you had any intention of proceeding as far as the Colorado. But you precipitately left your camp early that same morning, induced by a sound resembling that of a cannon which repeatedly elicited from you the expression that you "had no idea that the enemy would be upon you so soon," but which we afterwards learned was only the explosion of whisky barrels in ill-fated Gonzales. You made forced marches for the Colorado amid the murmurings and complaints of your dissatisfied army. You crossed the Colorado fifteen miles above the great crossing at Beason's; taking a solitary and unusual route, one certainly which the enemy would not think of taking, and which they did not take. You remained there \* \* \* <sup>2</sup>days, and finally at the remonstrance of many of your officers and the universal complaints of your men, you removed down to Beason's crossing. \* \* \* What possible reason could you have for going to Burnham's crossing? No one that I have ever heard speak on the subject has been able to assign any. \* \* \*

You are now, sir, encamped on the eastern bank of the Colorado, with an army numbering from fifteen hundred to seventeen hundred men. But we will here make a pause, and, leaving out of the question the disgracefulness of the retreat, make some inquiry into its influence on the better interests of the country.

<sup>1</sup>The town was not burned until after the army had left it.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>Illegible.—E. C. B.



When you commenced your retreat from Gonzales Col. Fannin was at Goliad with five hundred men. You attempted no diversion in his favor, you attempted no co-operation,<sup>1</sup> you sent him no intelligence of your movements, of your ulterior intention. \* \* \* How easy it would have been for you to have fallen down upon Victoria and by uniting with Fannin have brought off his whole detachment in safety; for your army by that time, with the numerous recruits there were coming in, would have equaled at least fifteen hundred men, a number that under any other leader would not have thought of a retreat; but would have marched to battle and to certain victory. \* \* \*

By your retreat you abandoned the whole country west of the Colorado to the enemy; but what was still more disastrous than all, you infused a feeling of terror and dismay into the minds of the people; and so soon as it was heard that you were retreating, hundreds who were on their way to join the army at once returned for the purpose of removing their families beyond danger. The people of Texas, although aware of their vast inferiority in point of number, to the Mexicans, yet had boldly gone into a declaration of independence, reasoning from numerous battles that had occurred, that they were a full match for the Mexicans with a difference of ten to one. When the Declaration of Independence was made, it was supposed that Santa Anna had an army of ten thousand men in Texas, and yet the people, so far from running away, were hastening to the army for the purpose of "enjoying a frolic" in whipping the Mexicans, as they styled it. So soon, however, as it was found that you were retreating, a new face was given to the whole matter. It was at once said that Texas was lost, that the men we now had to fight were a different order from the Mexicans we had so often whipped. It was said that Santa Anna with choice legions was coming down upon us, and that so far from whipping them ten to one, we were unable to contend with them man to man. So soon as you crossed the Colorado the families all to the west of that river hurried away to the settlements on the east side, and by the dreadful accounts given in their terror the feeling became general, and universal consternation seized the country. Thousands who had a week before

<sup>1</sup>Houston ordered him to fall back to Victoria "as soon as practicable."—E C. B.

little dreamed that anything was to be apprehended from Mexicans, who were going and preparing to go to the army, were now scattered throughout the land, fleeing from the wrath behind them. The situation of things at this time was awful. You yourself perceived the magnitude of your folly and you sent messengers throughout the country, telling the people to stay at home, that you intended to fight and to whip the enemy on the Colorado. This assurance had a most salutary influence. A large number did stop in their career, and many of them were hurrying to the army when they found they were in full retreat to the Brazos. All confidence in you now was gone; people gave up the country as wholly lost, and then commenced that "runaway scrape" as 'tis called in Texas, which did not stop until many had passed the Sabine and others heard of the fortune of our arms at San Jacinto.

\* \* \* You were now, as I have before said, encamped on the eastern bank of the Colorado. You now have an army of from fifteen hundred to seventeen hundred men, and notwithstanding the terrible panic that has siezed the country, you have every reason to believe that a short time will make it two thousand. On the opposite side Gen. Siesma, the Mexican general, is encamped with seven hundred men. Your spies assure you that no reinforcement is at hand, that his encampment can easily be approached; and one universal burst from the army desired you to lead them to the conflict; yet you hesitated. \* \* \* Col. Sherman, who commanded the crossing at Dewees's earnestly entreated that he might be permitted to cross over with three hundred men, promising to rout the enemy or not return alive. This you declined and yet hesitated to fight. You hesitated so long that the most mutinous feeling began to show itself, and to allay the storm, you unequivocally assured the army that you would fight on the next morning at daybreak. You even went so far as to write letters to families on the Colorado to remain at home, assuring them that you would fight next morning at daybreak. \* \* \* That morning, however, \* \* \* broke to an army dispirited and mutinous, desperate in the highest degree; but still unresolved what to do. You had promised in the morning to fight at daybreak of the next; but on the evening of that same day you called the army together and made it a speech. You represented the imperative necessity of the encampment being removed to a place where water and grass could be had, and although this seemed unac-

countably strange, when you were engaged to fight the next morning, yet your order was obeyed, and you retreated seven miles that evening. No one had the most distant conception that you were retreating from the enemy until they came up with Col. Sherman's command. \* \* \* The whole country west of that river was now possessed by the enemy; universal panic had siezed the people; women and children were flying in crowds from their homes and scattered throughout the land, presented an object of harrowing pity that made your brave army weep. Fannin had now capitulated to an overwhelming force and his fate was uncertain. Had you crossed the river and captured Siesma and his army, as you could have so easily done, you would have had such hostages as would have saved Fannin and his men from the cruel fate to which they were destined. \* \* \* But, sir, independent of all other considerations, in a military point of view, now was the time to fight. Texas, as I have before stated, had gone into this revolution anticipating that she would have to battle with the odds largely against her. If she could not whip Mexico man to man, then indeed was her cause helpless; but here by some strange infatuation, a force of seven hundred men had deliberately thrown itself in your way and you had but to reach forth your hand to capture it. If you could not destroy this force, then was utter ruin to Texas the consequence. If with two to one you were not a match for Siesma, when and where and how did you expect to contend with Santa Anna, when he should unite his detachments and marshal an army of ten thousand, as you then supposed, animated by its victories and confident of success? You could not have thought ever to have had a better opportunity than the one before you. \* \* \* As the Commander-in-Chief of Texas you could not have placed Santa Anna's forces in a more disadvantageous situation for himself or more advantageous for yourself. Siesma had seven hundred men on the Colorado before you. Santa Anna was at Gonzales, sixty miles distant, on the march with one thousand men under Filisola. Gaona was on the march to Bastrop with one thousand men, on his way to the Trinity (the upper route); Gen. Andrade was at Bexar with fifteen hundred men; Gen. Urrea at Goliad with two thousand men; and numerous small detachments scattered at different points to the west of San Antonio. Now, sir, by routing Siesma, you could have immediately have fallen upon

Santa Anna on his way from Gonzales, and have given him battle with nearly two to one in your favor. A victory over him would have given you the choice of attacking Gaona or Urrea, as you might have deemed proper, without the ability on the part of one to have assisted the other. With the exception of Urrea, every detachment of Santa Anna's army was inferior in point of numbers to your own, and you then and there \* \* \* refused an advantage which Providence appeared to have given you. \* \* \* You have since given as a reason for not fighting at the Colorado that your cannon had not arrived, and you have endeavored to affix the blame on Col. John A. Wharton, who, you say, prevented the arrival of the cannon. \* \* \*

The morning that you had promised to fight the enemy found you in full retreat for the Brazos. \* \* \* That night you reached San Felipe, and propositions from many quarters were made to depose you. I certainly supposed that next morning it would be done at all events; it was well understood, as I supposed with a considerable portion of the army that they would not follow you longer. On the next morning you determined to leave San Felipe and to go up the Brazos twenty miles. Your army followed you with the exception of my company. Satisfied that you had no intention to fight, I indignantly refused longer to follow you. You put your army in motion and when you found that I would no longer be led by you, you rode back to me in person and gave me orders to take post opposite San Felipe with my command, and gave me orders to burn the town on the approach of the enemy. You pursued your route up the Brazos and finally encamped amid some lakes, at a spot to which no roads ran. Will you tell me why you went there? Why you abandoned the crossing at San Felipe, the great public highway of the country? I will tell you. You were bound for the Red Lands, and went there in order that you might at all times be at least twenty miles ahead of the enemy. By going there you left to the mercy of the enemy the whole population of the Brazos from San Felipe down. Not dreaming that you would retreat from the Colorado, but few of the Brazos families had removed, and when they did you had removed up the Brazos. \* \* \* I had but forty men with which to protect the crossing at San Felipe, and although you ordered me forthwith to cross over my men, I saw proper to refuse. I remained on the western side

until I had seen every family in San Felipe across the river. \* \* \* Satisfied that should the enemy effect a crossing at San Felipe, the whole population on the eastern side of the river below, as well as that numerous population making its way to San Jacinto, would fall into the hands of the enemy, I went forthwith to cutting down trees and digging ditches, determined to protect the crossing at all hazards. My work was not complete when Santa Anna in person with a thousand men arrived. When he came, I had but forty men and had besides a number of Mexicans who you considered enemies and whom you gave me to guard. Notwithstanding the continued cannonading that we sustained, my men were undaunted. \* \* \* After several days skirmishing, the enemy retreated and crossed at Fort Bend, below.

Your retreating policy now began to develop its consequences. Although many on the Brazos joined you, and two companies on your retreat from the Colorado, yet your army at your camp now could not muster, in all probability, over thirteen hundred men. Volunteers had joined me at San Felipe, making my force eighty-five men. At Fort Bend, thirty miles below, there were one hundred men; and still below, under Col. Morehouse (now Gen. Morehouse) and Capt. Eberly \* \* \*<sup>1</sup> men. You had lost some three or four hundred men who had been with you at the Colorado, but who now were satisfied that you would not fight, had left the army, and gone to take care of their families. Notwithstanding all this, had you fallen down to San Felipe, and ordered up the companies from below, you would have had some seventeen hundred fighting men; and had you made such a demonstration as would have left no doubt of your fighting, in two days time you could have confidently counted on two thousand men. \* \* \* You had the steamer Yellowstone at your command, the river was very high and any other man than yourself would not have desired a more favorable opportunity for attacking the enemy. But no; there you remained, resisting the earnest entreaties of your officers and men for battle. \* \* \* You have repeatedly stated that the reason you did not fight on the Colorado was because you had no cannon. You had two good pieces on the Brazos, and yet you did not fight.<sup>2</sup> \* \* \* You also deny having given me an order to burn

<sup>1</sup>Illegible.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>The cannon did not arrive till the 11th.—E. C. B.

San Felipe. \* \* \* My statement received full credit before the auditorial court. \* \* \*

You then sent down an officer of the line to bring up all below your camp. \* \* \* I believed you were running to the Red Lands, and believed it my duty to use every attempt to depose you, if you should take the road for the east; but on learning on the next day that you were bound for Galveston bay, in accordance with the orders of the Secretary at Washington, I overlooked the past and followed cheerfully your command.

\* \* \* It is true you were nominally the head of the army, because you had been appointed by the Convention; but the government existed now only in the imagination. Your retreating policy had caused the inhabitants in a body to move in the direction of the Sabine. The men with you were nearly all that remained of the population; and our hopes of liberty, of homes, and of property now depended on our own exertions. \* \* \* By calling to your assistance the companies from below and letting it be distinctly understood that you would fight the enemy on the Brazos, you could have commanded two thousand men; with two pieces of artillery and a steamboat to facilitate your operations. The enemy were now situated as follows: Santa Anna and Siesma at San Felipe with one thousand men; Gaona on the road from Bastrop to San Felipe, distant at least seventy miles, Filisola between the Guadalupe and the Colorado, distant at least sixty miles; Urrea at Matagorda, distant ninety miles; and the remainder of Santa Anna's troops to the west of the San Antonio river. You could have fallen upon Santa Anna with two to one in your favor, or you could have attacked General Gaona, having in your favor the same odds, without the possibility of any detachment giving assistance to the other. You now had it in your power to have defeated in detail every detachment of Santa Anna's army, with a large numerical superiority on your part, and yet not a gun was fired at them, except what was done from my camp and from the one at Fort Bend.

The necessity of doing something decisive was now apparent to all, for the most sanguine spirits in your army now began to despond. \* \* \* You felt that the cause of Texas was forever lost, and you determined to retreat at least to the very bosom of the Red Lands. But immaterial what was the cause, the necessity for a

fight was now so apparent that the army generally, as I have always understood, determined that a fight should be had and that you should be deposed. \* \* \* If you continued your flight to the Red Lands, then all that portion of the population which had crossed the San Jacinto on the lower route must inevitably have fallen into the hands of the Mexicans and Cushatte Indians. If you took the lower route without fighting them, all that portion of the population which had gone to the Trinity by way of Robin's ferry would fall into the hands of General Gaona, who was then supposed to be on that route, and of the Cherokees and other Indians, whose hostility now began to be more and more apparent. You and your army might escape by taking a middle route, and what course you would pursue was the important question. When you left your camp at Donoho's the question was now settled to the satisfaction of the army. \* \* \* Much the larger portion believed that you were bound for the Red Lands, and the most intense anxiety prevailed as we approached the fork of the roads, one going in the direction of Nacogdoches and the other to Harrisburg. Had you taken the road to Nacogdoches, that hour would have terminated your command and another would have been placed in your stead. Fortunate, however, for you and for Texas, the Secretary of War, Gen. Rusk, had now arrived in camp. Contrary to your intention and your judgment, he ordered you to march in the direction of Linchburg. This I had from your own lips. You stated to me, on the day of the march after leaving Donoho's, "that you were not and would not be responsible for the move, and that you were now going to Linchburg by order of the Secretary of War, whose order you had in your pockets." That route, you, however, did take, and a more heart-rending scene Texas never witnessed. Afraid of the Indians on either route, a large number of families, I should say not less than three hundred women and children, had remained within a few miles of your camp; but now they were seen scattering in every direction, some taking one route and some another, weeping and wailing. The rumors of an Indian outbreak aggravated the horrors of the period, but more than all, the conviction that you did not intend to fight heightened the despair. While you were on your route to Harrisburg it was not known that the enemy were on the way to Linchburg, and as you did not see proper to go where you knew the enemy were, dismay was the con-

sequence. At least five hundred men in the course of twenty-four hours abandoned the army for the purpose of guarding their families and friends, believing that Texas was intrinsically lost.

You are now, however, on your route to Linchburg, and of course you have some object in going there. You say to fight the enemy. Be it so. We will look to your movements. While you were at Donoho's, seventy miles from Linchburg, Santa Anna has crossed the river at a point forty-five miles from Linchburg. Your object, you say, was to intercept him. Let us inquire how you manage. Your first day's march is to McCurley's, thirteen miles; your second to Burnett's, fifteen miles; your next is fifteen miles, and about eleven o'clock on the next day, 18th of April, you arrive opposite Harrisburg. Immediately on your arrival, the mail destined to Santa Anna was captured, and now for the first time you know that he is below you in the neighborhood of Linchburg, having passed through Harrisburg the evening of the 16th. \* \* \* The captured mail gave you information of Santa Anna's position, and that he had with him only five hundred men.<sup>1</sup> You could now muster, say, nine hundred men. You were now between him and the balance of his forces. \* \* \*

Why did you do so? It was not for the purpose of a fight, because, as I have stated, you have already passed the enemy, and by this move you place him between you and his army on the Brazos. \* \* \* At the ferry (Lynch's) you can have no wood, no timber to shelter you from the hot burning rays of the sun; but in a flat, marshy ground, without scarcely a dry place for an encampment, you have rushed your army, leaving the high sheltered ground in your rear, from which the enemy could play his artillery without danger or risk. But, \* \* \* I do not believe you had any idea of encamping in such a place. I am satisfied that it was your purpose to cross the San Jacinto and place that stream between you and the enemy. And I am supported in this opinion by your very next movement. Having almost reached the ferry, messenger after messenger in quick succession arrived, stating that the Mexican army was just in your rear. To cross from the ferry

<sup>1</sup>He really had 750 men.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>The copyist has inserted a note saying that here a part of the original MS. is lost.—E. C. B.



was impossible, to encamp where you were was equally so; and you gave orders for the army immediately to retrograde and form the encampment on Buffalo bayou, in the timber through which we had previously passed. This was barely effected when Santa Anna appeared in full view. \* \* \* Your own brave army quailed not, but with ready rifle anxiously awaited the word to charge. \* \* \* But no such fortune was in store. Your order was for them to remain under the bank and not to show themselves. You played upon the enemy with your cannon, before which they immediately quailed and obliques to an island of timber, distant, say, four hundred yards, from whence they cannonaded you some hours. \* \* \* You are almost twice their strength in numbers<sup>1</sup> and you are urged to the fight by the almost frantic demands of the army, for so frantic was the demand for a fight that it was with the utmost difficulty that I could prevent my company from rushing on the enemy. \* \* \* But no order for a fight came and you suffered the Mexicans unmolested to retreat to an encampment about a mile distant, from whence some hours they continued to cannonade you. \* \* \* On the retreat of the enemy, one universal clamor prevailed throughout your ranks. You were an object of hatred and disgust, and the proposition was entertained to arrest you for the future disposition of the Cabinet, and to place some one in your stead. The most of the field officers, I know, had no objection to its being done; but their refusal to take the lead prevented any action on the part of others. In this condition of feeling we remained until a call was made for volunteer cavalry to go out on some expedition not publicly known. Some fifty or sixty cavalry under Colonel Sherman did go out and boldly attacked the enemy in his lines, drove back their cavalry, and maintained their ground for some time against the whole Mexican force. \* \* \* It is the first opportunity that any portion of your army has had of trying strength with the enemy on an open field, and it is sufficient to say that they covered themselves with glory. They demonstrated to you and to your army that the men before whom we had so long \* \* \* retreated were the same pusillanimous foe that we had ever whipped. \* \* \* Your camp that night and succeeding morning was one of uproar and confusion. Officers and men were

<sup>1</sup>Houston had 783 men, Santa Anna 750.—E. C. B.

seen grouped together discussing the practicability of doing anything. \* \* \* When next morning it was understood that you had ordered a floating bridge to be built across the bayou, one universal expression was that it should not be done. During the forenoon of that day various members of the army were seen publicly and fearlessly going from company to company, \* \* \* soliciting volunteers to fight the enemy without your consent. During this period of exasperation Gen. Cos was seen by our cavalry marching into Santa Anna's camp with a re-enforcement from the Brazos. Your relative positions were now changed. Santa Anna had now become nearly double your strength in point of numbers, and every hour you have reason to believe will now add to that strength. In this emergency you are still unresolved what to do. You dare not attempt to cross the San Jacinto; you cannot retreat back the way you came, because you have every reason to believe that you will meet the whole Mexican force. You have no provisions in your camp, and you are now fairly at bay. In this \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Deaf Smith rode up to you and asked to take some men and burn the bridge over Vince's bayou, in order to delay any re-enforcement that might be coming from the Brazos. This you granted and, although your situation is now one of victory or death, still you are unresolved what to do. One universal demand is heard from all parts of your camp, not in the language of entreaty, but in the dictatorial language of freemen, whose all was now involved. You were plainly told that you must fight or that the army would disband. \* \* \* There was in fact no other course left but to fight or surrender, and at the hour of three o'clock P. M., on the 21st day of April, 1836, you gave an order for the army to prepare for battle. \* \* \*

After retreating from Gonzales with fifteen hundred men before Siesma with seven hundred men, after giving up Fannin and his men to a cruel massacre, after retreating from the Brazos before half your number, after refusing to fight on the 20th Santa Anna when he charged down upon you with five hundred men, after giving up all Texas, as it were, and scattering its population in every quarter and direction, you are at last compelled to march out and attack the enemy in his encampment with all the advantage which his situation gives him, and having twice your number of men. \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup>Illegible.—E. C. B.

You are now drawn up before the enemy in battle array. \* \* \* The Mexican artillery and the Mexican musketry are playing upon your line, but your men, obedient to orders, move not, fire not. "Trail rifles and forward!" is the word. \* \* \* When within seventy yards the word "Fire!" is heard, and a string of blaze proceeds from your line. "Charge!" instantaneously follows, and then, \* \* \* the enemy are now in full flight. We have possessed their cannon and their camp, and they are fleeing unresistingly before us. We have pursued them some three hundred yards beyond their camp, killing them as we go. A few minutes more and they will be ours, when the voice of Sam Houston is heard, shouting to "Halt, that the fate of Texas now depends on the cast of a die, and that Gen. Cos is coming up with re-enforcements!" Such, sir, was your language and your order, but, fortunately for Texas, your power was now at an end. With the exception of a few regulars, your army was composed of volunteers, of men of substance, the bone and sinew of the land, who were fighting for everything dear on earth, and who heard your order only to laugh it to scorn. Of all the volunteers in your army, not one obeyed you. I was in ten steps of you, and Gen. Rusk, the Secretary of War, a short distance further on. When your order to halt was given he immediately replied to you as follows: "Gen. Houston, I have been your friend, but I have followed you long enough. The victory is not yet complete and \* \* \* the army shall go ahead." \* \* \* You will also please bear in mind that when your order to halt was given that not more than a hundred of the enemy had been slain and not one prisoner made; and the most important of the work was done in express violation of your commands. \* \* \*

You have now encamped, say, eight hundred men. Several squads of men have arrived at your camp on Buffalo bayou,<sup>1</sup> making the number there about four hundred. You have intelligence of the advance of three companies from the east. Capt. Wiley Martin's company is within fifty miles. Capt. Bird's company about the same distance and Capt. (now Gen.) Morehouse about the same distance. You can command at least twelve hundred men, and within three days time you can command upwards of fifteen hundred men. \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup>Probably the Harrisburg camp, where the baggage train was left.—  
E. C. B.

\* \* \* You speak of the wonderful advantages to Texas resulting from the battle of San Jacinto, and I would like to ascertain from you what those advantages are. Has it obtained for us an acknowledgment of our independence? Has it diminished the angry and vindictive feelings of Santa Anna, etc., etc.? No, it has done none of these things. \* \* \*

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IV.

*Delgado's Account of the Battle.*

[This account is taken from the diary of Col. Pedro Delgado, of Santa Anna's staff, and gives, therefore, the Mexican point of view. It was first published in Filisola's *Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas*, I, 82-116, Mexico, 1849.<sup>1</sup> The following extracts are taken *passim* from a translation in the *Texas Almanac*, 1870, 41-53.]

On the 14th of April, 1836, His Excellency the President ordered his Staff to prepare to march, with only one skiff and leaving his own and the officers' baggage with General Ramirez y Sesma, who was instructed to remain at the crossing of the Brazos, whither we expected to return within three days.

On the 13th the flank companies of the Battalions of Matamoros, Aldama, Guerrero, Toluca, Mexico, and, I believe Guadalajara, had commenced crossing the river with a six-pounder commanded by Lieutenant Ignacio Arrenal, and fifty mounted men of Tampico and Guanajuato, who formed His Excellency's escort. The whole force amounted to six hundred men, more or less.

At about four o'clock P. M. His Excellency started for Harrisburg, with the force above mentioned.

The bottom of the Brazos is a dense and lofty timber, over three leagues wide. On reaching the prairie we found a small creek, which offered only one crossing. The infantry passed it comfortably over a large tree, which had fallen in such a manner as to form

<sup>1</sup>In 1848-49, Filisola published two volumes under this title, and in 1849 two supplementary volumes—numbered, respectively, I and II—bearing the same title. The first set—Volume I, published in 1848, and Volume II, in 1849—is Filisola's history of the war; the other set—both volumes published in 1849—consists chiefly of a collection of documents concerning the war. Delgado's narrative is in Volume I of the latter set.

a convenient bridge. The ammunition was passed over by band. But His Excellency, to avoid delay, ordered the baggage and the commissary stores to remain packed on the mules. However, the water was soon over the pack-saddles, and the opposite bank was steep and slippery. Several mules fell down, interfering with each other, which resulted in a terrible jamming of officers and dragoons, pack-mules and horses. This, together with shouts and curses, completed a scene of wild confusion, which His Excellency witnessed with hearty laughter. Several officers and dragoons fell in the water; the stores were damaged and two mules were drowned. So much for the precipitation of this march.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

On the 15th, at eight o'clock A. M., most of the stragglers having joined, we started again.

At about noon we reached a plantation abundantly supplied with corn, meal, sheep and hogs; it had a good garden and a fine cotton gin. We halted to refresh men and beasts.

At three o'clock P. M., after having set fire to the dwelling and gin houses, we resumed our march. Here His Excellency started ahead with his staff and escort, leaving General Castrillon in command of the infantry. We traveled at a brisk trot at least ten leagues, without halting, until we reached the vicinity of Harrisburg, at about eleven o'clock at night. His Excellency, with an adjutant and fifteen dragoons, went on foot to that town, distant about one mile, entered it, and succeeded in capturing two Americans, who stated that Zavala and other members of the so-called government of Texas, had left the morning before for Galveston. A part of the infantry joined us on the following morning at daylight.

On the 16th we remained at Harrisburg to await our broken-down stragglers, who kept dropping in till two or three o'clock.

On the opposite side of the bayou we found two or three houses well supplied with wearing apparel, mainly for women's use, fine furniture, an excellent piano, jars of preserves, chocolate, fruit, etc., all of which were appropriated for the benefit of His Excellency and his attendants. I and others obtained only what they could not use. After the houses had been sacked and burnt down a party of Americans fired upon our men from the woods; it is wonderful that some of us, camped as we were along the bank of the

bayou, were not killed. The quartermaster-sergeant of Matamoros was seriously wounded. This incident took place at five o'clock P. M. On the same day Colonel Almonte started from Harrisburg for New Washington with the cavalry.

On the 17th, at about three o'clock P. M., His Excellency, after having instructed me to burn the town, started for New Washington with the troops. It was nearly dark when we had finished crossing the bayou. Then a courier from General Almonte arrived, upon which His Excellency ordered Colonel Iberri to start with his adjutant, bearing dispatches to General Filisola, on the Brazos.

\* \* \*

On the morning of the 18th we moved on, our cannon being still far away.

At noon we reached New Washington, where we found flour, soap, tobacco, and other articles, which were issued to the men.

\* \* \*

General Castrillon came in, at five o'clock P. M., with the cannon.

On the 19th His Excellency ordered Captain Barragan to start with a detachment of dragoons to reconnoitre Houston's movements. We halted at that place, all being quiet.

On the 20th, at about eight o'clock A. M., everything was ready for the march. We had burnt a fine warehouse on the wharf, and all the houses in the town, when Captain Barragan rushed in at full speed, reporting that Houston was close on our rear, and that his troops had captured some of our stragglers, and had disarmed and dispatched them.

There is in front of New Washington a dense wood, through which runs a narrow lane, about half a league in length, allowing passage to pack-mules in single file only, and to mounted men in double file. This lane was filled with our pickets, the drove of mules, and the remainder of the detachment. His Excellency and staff were still in town. Upon hearing Barragan's report, he leaped on his horse, and galloped off at full speed for the lane, which, being crowded with men and mules, did not afford him as prompt an exit as he wished. However, knocking down one and riding over another, he overcame the obstacles, shouting at the top of his voice: "The enemy are coming! The enemy are coming!" The excitement of the General-in-Chief had such a terrifying effect upon the troops, that every face turned pale; order could no longer be pre-

served, and every man thought of flight or of finding a hiding place, and gave up all idea of fighting. Upon reaching the prairie a column of attack was formed, with trepidation and confusion, amidst incoherent movements and contradictory orders.

At this moment His Excellency did me the honor to place me in command of the artillery and ordnance, giving me his orders verbally, with strict injunctions as to my responsibility. Meanwhile, the officers having dismounted and taken their stations in front of their commands, we moved in search of the enemy, with flankers on both sides to explore the woods. \* \* \*

It was two o'clock P. M. when we descried Houston's pickets at the edge of a large wood, in which he concealed his main force. Our skirmishers commenced firing; they were answered by the enemy, who fell back in the woods. His Excellency reached the ground with our main body, with the intention, as I understood, of attacking at once; but they kept hidden, which prevented him from ascertaining their position. He therefore changed his dispositions, and ordered the company of Toluca to deploy as skirmishers in the direction of the woods. Our cannon established on a small elevation, opened its fire. The enemy responded with a discharge of grape, which wounded severely Captain Urrzia, and killed his horse.

\* \* \* \* \*

At nine o'clock A. M., General Cos came in with a reinforcement of about five hundred men. His arrival was greeted with the roll of drums and joyful shouts. As it was represented to His Excellency that these men had not slept the night before, he instructed them to stack their arms, to remove their accoutrements, and to go to sleep quietly in the adjoining grove.

No important incident took place until 4:30 o'clock P. M. At this fatal moment the bugler on our right signaled the advance of the enemy upon that wing. His Excellency and staff were asleep; the greater number of the men were also sleeping; of the rest, some were eating, others were scattered in the woods in search of boughs to prepare shelter. Our line was composed of musket stacks. Our cavalry was riding bare-back to and from water.

I stepped upon some ammunition boxes the better to observe the movements of the enemy. I saw that their formation was a mere line in one rank and very extended. In their centre was the Texas

flag; on both wings they had two light cannons, well manned. Their cavalry was opposite our front, overlapping our left.

In this disposition, yelling furiously, with a brisk fire of grape, muskets and rifles, they advanced resolutely upon our camp. There the utmost confusion prevailed. General Castrillon shouted on one side; on another, Colonel Almonte was giving orders; some cried out to commence firing; others, to lie down to avoid grape shots. Among the latter was His Excellency.

Then, already, I saw our men flying in small groups, terrified, and sheltering themselves behind large trees. I endeavored to force some of them to fight, but all efforts were in vain—the evil was beyond remedy; they were a bewildered and panic stricken herd.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then I saw His Excellency running about in the utmost excitement, wringing his hands and unable to give an order. General Castrillon was stretched on the ground, wounded in the leg. Colonel Treviño was killed, and Colonel Marcial Aguirre was severely injured.

\* \* \* \* \*

There they killed Colonel Batrés; and it would have been all over with us, had not Providence placed us in the hands of the noble and generous captain of cavalry, Allen, who by great exertion saved us repeatedly from being slaughtered by the drunken and infuriated volunteers.

\* \* \*

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## V.

### *Kuykendall's Recollections of the Campaign.*

[This account of the San Jacinto campaign was written by J. H. Kuykendall at some time after 1856, I judge—since he annotates it with a reference to Yoakum's *History of Texas*—and has never before been published. It is apparently free from prejudice, and seems worthy of reliance. The MS. belongs to the Austin Papers, in the collection of Hon. Guy M. Bryan.

*Summary:* The Texan army at Gonzales could not have exceeded 400 men when Houston assumed command.

General Houston gave some of his baggage wagons to the families of Gonzales to facilitate their flight, and, since this deprived the army of the means of transportation, most of their baggage had to be burned.



On the march from San Felipe to Groce's, Houston declared that he did not intend to march to the Red Lands.

At Groce's, there was open talk among both officers and men of deposing the commander, in case he continued his retreating policy.

The writer believes that, at the fork of the road below McCurley's, the army took the Harrisburg road without any order from Houston.

About seventy-five effective men were left in camp at Harrisburg to guard between 150 and 200 sick. The rest of the army, about 800 strong, marched in pursuit of the Mexicans.]

I was in Mexico when hostilities commenced between her and Texas. I arrived at home (twenty-two miles above San Felipe) between the 15 and 20 of February, 1836—a few days previous to which time my neighbors had organized themselves into a company—having elected Robert McNutt captain and Gibson Kuykendall and John Burleson lieutenants.

A few days afterwards an express from Travis reached San Felipe with the intelligence that the Mexican army under Santa Anna had commenced siege of the Alamo, and urging his countrymen to repair to his assistance with all possible dispatch. Gov't. responded to his call by ordering the various companies which had been organized to march forthwith towards San Antonio. Gonzales was designated as the point of general rendezvous. I enrolled myself in Capt. McNutt's company, which took up the line of march on the evening of the first day of March, 1836. On the morning of the 2d March, we formed a junction with Capt. Moseley Baker's company from San Felipe. Both companies were infantry, and each had a baggage wagon. The night of the third of March, we slept at Rocky creek, twenty miles west of the Colorado, where we were joined by Capt. Thomas Rabb's company, from Egypt, on the Colorado, and on the morning of the 6th we reached Gonzales, where we found two companies, to wit, Capt. Billingsley's from Bastrop and Capt. Sherman's from Kentucky. On the 7th another company (Capt. Hill's) arrived from Washington, on the Brazos. The companies of Sherman and Billingsley were encamped on the west bank of the river. The other companies encamped in the bottom, on the east bank of the Guadalupe, about a mile below the village of Gonzales, and less than half that distance below the ferry. Capt. Baker was chosen by the heads of companies to take charge of our little force until the arrival of a superior officer. We were in total ignorance of the fall of the Alamo, and hoped it would

be able to hold out until we could relieve it. Parties were sent out in the direction of San Antonio (distant seventy miles), but they brought back no tidings of friend or foe.

On the west side of the river, opposite our encampment, was a bluff, which overlooked our position. This circumstance was noticed by Capt. Baker, who caused a number of trees to be felled and a circuit-shaped breastwork to be erected in front of our camp. The men rather sharply criticized this first essay of Capt. Baker in the art of fortification, and contended that the trees as they stood in the forest afforded much better protection. Notwithstanding our own perilous situation, and our anxiety about our friends in the Alamo, there was a good deal of life and merriment in our camp. Pork, corn meal, and vegetables were supplied us in abundance by the people of Gonzales, and we had brought a good supply of bacon and sugar and coffee from home. But our days of good cheer were fated to be few.

On the 11th of March, General Houston arrived, and on the 12th reviewed and addressed his tiny army. By his orders a regiment was organized on the 12th by the election of Edward Burleson for colonel, S. Sherman for Lieut. Col., A. Somervill for major. General Houston also caused our camp to be moved two or three hundred yards—to the edge of the prairie—where our tents were pitched in two parallel rows.

On the evening of the 13th Mrs. Dickinson and Travis's negro man arrived at Gonzales with the astounding intelligence that the Alamo had been assaulted and taken on the morning of the 6th, and all of its defenders slain. Superadded to this news, a rumor became rife that two thousand of the enemy—the advance division of the Mexican army—might be hourly expected at Gonzales. As may reasonably be supposed this news produced intense excitement in our camp. In the little village of Gonzales the distress of the families was extreme. Some of them had lost friends and near and dear relations in the Alamo, and now the ruthless foe was at hand, and they unprepared to fly. To facilitate their exit, Gen'l. Houston caused some of our baggage wagons to be given up to them; but the teams, which were grazing in the prairie, were yet to be found, and night had already set in. In the meantime, orders were issued to the army to prepare as fast as possible to retreat. As most of the companies (all infantry) had been deprived of the means of

transportation, all our baggage and provisions, except what we were able to pack ourselves, were thrown into our camp-fires. Tents, clothing, coffee, meal, and bacon were alike consigned to the devouring element. Tall spires of flame shot up in every direction, illuminating prairie and woodland. About ten o'clock one of the captains marched his company to Gen'l Houston's tent and said, "General, my company is ready to march." The general, in a voice loud enough to be heard throughout the camp, replied, "In the name of God, sir, don't be in haste—wait till all are ready and let us retreat in good order."

Accordingly, about eleven o'clock, it was announced that all were in readiness to march. We were formed four deep and at the command, "Forward! March!" commenced their memorable retreat. The night was warm, but so dark as to constrain the army to move at a very moderate pace. Silent, and, indeed, solemn was the march. As we passed through the streets of Gonzales, we noticed great lights in the houses and the people packing up their household effects in all possible haste. A man came out on the piazza and said (addressing the army), "In the name of God, gentlemen, I hope you are not going to leave the families behind!" Some one in our ranks answered, "O yes, we are all looking out for number one." In another minute we had emerged from the illuminated street and were again "covered with darkness as with a pall." Although most of our men were accustomed to service, very few had ever served as footmen until this campaign or borne such burdens as were imposed on them that night. A mile or two east of Gonzales the road entered an extensive post-oak forest and was in some places quite sandy, which greatly increased the fatigue of the march. Many men becoming leg-weary, left the ranks and lay down at the roadside to rest. About an hour before day, having *felt* our way to McClure's, on the east side of Peach creek (ten or eleven miles from Gonzales), we were halted and ordered to lie down on our arms. Never was order more promptly obeyed. Many of the men did not take time to spread their blankets, but lay down on the bare ground with their knapsacks under their heads, and were almost instantly asleep. In the meantime, a brilliant light shot up far above the western horizon. This phenomenon was caused by the conflagration of the town of Gonzales. After an hour's repose, we

were aroused. By this time many of the families of Gonzales had overtaken the army and paused for rest and refreshment.

While we were sipping our unsweetened coffee, two or three loud explosions in quick succession were heard in the direction of Gonzales, and the idea instantly occurred to, perhaps, nearly every man in the army that these reports were caused by the artillery of the enemy. But this apprehension was soon removed by a suggestion which seemed very reasonable and which proved true, that these sounds were produced by the explosion of some canisters of gunpowder which had been left in one of the burning houses. This morning we were joined by thirty or forty mounted men, most of whom were from the Brazos and had passed the preceding night near the spot where the army bivouacked.

Immediately after dispatching our scanty breakfast, the march was resumed. At the distance of four or five miles we emerged from the oak forest before mentioned, and entered a wide, undulating prairie, on the principal eminence of which—known as the “Big Hill”—the army was halted a few minutes to rest.

Though it was yet early in the spring, the prairie was as green as an emerald, and the sun, which during the morning had been hidden by clouds, suddenly shone out, heightening the beauty of the scenery and greatly exhilarating our spirits. During this halt I remember to have noticed the contrast in the personal appearance and attire of Cols. Burleson and Sherman. The former wore a somewhat faded, blue home-spun round-jacket and pantaloons. He carried no sword or other arms, except a pair of small pistols in his belt. Sherman had a much more trim and military appearance. He wore a blue cloth round-jacket trimmed with silver lace, and a handsome dress sword was suspended at his side. Yet the former had seen much service, both in the United States and Texas, whilst the latter was then in his novitiate.

Immediately after the march was resumed, Gen'l. Houston rode slowly from the front to the rear of the army, pointing towards the ranks with his finger, evidently counting the men. Having numbered his host, he returned to the front, proclaiming as he rode along in his peculiar deliberate and distinct utterance, “we are the rise of eight hundred strong, and with a good position can whip ten to one of the enemy.” I have no doubt that he purposely exaggerated our strength in order to inspirit the men. Our force, in

fact, could not have much exceeded four hundred men, towit, six companies of infantry, averaging probably sixty men each, and, *perhaps*, sixty mounted men. I feel confident that had the fugitive families from Gonzales been included in the estimate, the number of souls then on the "Big Hill" did not exceed, if it reached, eight hundred.

Some cases of measles appeared in the army before the retreat commenced, and during this day's march my file-leader was extremely ill with that disease, and in due time I had to pass through the ordeal myself. A little after sunset the army reached Daniels's, on the waters of Lavaca, and encamped in the prairie remote from wood, but Daniels's fence was at a convenient distance and was used for fuel.

About dusk some beeves were driven up and slaughtered, and rations of meat distributed. We had no bread and but little coffee. As we had marched hard and slept little (indeed, some had not slept any) for twenty-four hours, this was a very trying night on the sentinels—one of whom, a young man by the name of Rhodes, of McNutt's company, was found asleep at his post. When this fact was reported to Gen'l. Houston the ensuing morning, he swore he would have Rhodes shot.

About one o'clock on the fifteenth the army reached the Navidad and encamped for the remainder of the day. Just before reaching the Navidad, we were met and joined by a squad of mounted men from the Brazos. During this day's march, at Rocky creek, Rhodes, who was under arrest, stopped in the middle of the stream to drink. This caused the men in the rear to halt for a moment. Gen'l. Houston rode to the crossing and inquired the cause of the halt, and when informed that it was made to give Rhodes time to drink, he cried aloud, "Knock him down, God d—n him, knock him down—standing there and impeding the march of the whole army, G—d d—n him, knock him down!" Frightened by these imprecations, Rhodes instantly cleared the way without the necessity of being felled. After we camped in the evening, the general reprimanded Rhodes and ordered his release.

At this camp the general was furious because some horses were turned loose to graze within the line of sentinels. He did not want many mounted men, and many of those who repaired to the army on horseback, rather than be dismounted, returned to their homes.

This they could do with impunity, as they were careful not to attach themselves to any organized company. This was the second attempt in the history of these colonies to organize an army of footmen, and, considering that our people were as much attached and accustomed to mounted service as the Cossack or Comanche, the voluntary relinquishment of the horse was a strong manifestation of patriotism.

March 16th, the army arrived on the west bank of the Colorado river, at Burnham's.

March 17th, the weather became drizzly, rendering our camp on the west bank of the river very muddy. This day a notorious character named Garner attempted to pass out of our lines *volens volens*, and the sentinel broke his gun over his head. More, anon, of this fellow. Here also, on this same day, General Houston, having occasion to pass beyond our lines, was hailed by a sentinel, who demanded his "pass." The general asked the guardian of the camp if he did not know that his general had a right to pass without being challenged; to which the sentinel replied, that he had been instructed by the officer of the day to permit no man to pass the lines without written permission of said officer of the day. "Well, my friend," said the general, "if such were your orders, you are right," and seating himself on a stump, waited till the officer of the day came and rectified the blunder. By two or three o'clock, the last man was ferried over to the east bank of the Colorado, and the same evening the army marched down the river as far as Crier's (2 or three miles). On the 19th, we marched a few miles farther down and camped early in the day in the post oak woods. There was rain this day. Here our scouts—at the head of whom was Capt. Karnes—rode into camp with a Mexican prisoner and created a lively sensation by the intelligence that they had that evening<sup>1</sup>, a few miles west of the Colorado, met the spies of the enemy and killed one and captured another. The killing was done by Secrest, who exhibited the sword and pistols of his adversary. The near approach of the Mexican army was now placed beyond doubt. On the 20th, the army moved a few miles farther down the river and encamped nearly opposite Beason's; Lieutenant-Col.

<sup>1</sup>Yoakum says this happened on the 20th. He is correct, provided the army arrived at Burnham's on the 17th instead of the 16th.

Sherman with about one hundred men having the same morning been detached to take a position at Dewees's crossing (a very shallow ford) about three miles above Beason's. On the morning of the 21st, our scouts came in and reported that a considerable force of the enemy was encamped on the west side of the Colorado within three miles of headquarters, and within less than two of Sherman's position. This intelligence greatly exhilarated the men, who were eager for a fight. Several large cottonwood trees were felled on the bank of the river at Beason's crossing (not fordable) behind which men were posted to dispute the passage of the river. Four miles farther down the river was the Atascocito crossing, which was unguarded. This circumstance, probably, did not occur to the general until late in the evening, about dusk, at which time he sent one of his aides to the camp of the company to which I belonged, with an urgent request that four or five of us would volunteer to proceed immediately down to said crossing. Felix G. Wright, David Lawrence, and myself, of Capt. McNutt's company; and John Ingram, of Capt. Hill's, at once volunteered for this service, and went to Gen. Houston's tent for his instruction. The general said, "It is very dark, men, for which reason, footmen can more easily find their way down than horsemen. You will proceed silently and cautiously to the Atascocito crossing, where you will all remain until you are relieved tomorrow morning; unless the enemy shall present himself on the opposite side of the river, in which event one of you will mount your best horse and bring the news *as speedily as possible*.<sup>1</sup> Guided by Ingram, we slowly and silently groped our way down to the crossing where we arrived about midnight. Here we remained until after sunrise the next morning without seeing or hearing aught of the enemy; and had already started back to camp when we met a relief guard of mounted men. About nine o'clock we got back to camp and reported to General Houston. During this and the succeeding two or three days the army was joined by several organized companies from eastern Texas, and numerous squads from various parts. During the remainder of the campaign we had tattoo and reveillé.

<sup>1</sup>Gen'l. H. was, *perhaps*, a little "in liquor," but I do not assert that he was. The inconsistency in his orders may be otherwise accounted for. I do not believe that he drank much during the campaign. He carried in his pocket a small bottle of salts of hartshorn, which he frequently applied to his nostrils.

On the morning of the 23rd, the army was paraded and informed that a strong division of the enemy were encamped within two miles, and in sight of Col. Sherman's position—to strengthen whom a hundred volunteers were now called for. The required number (among whom was my captain and the greater part of his company, including myself) instantly stepped in advance of the line, and in five minutes were *en route* for Dewees's ford. On our way up we met a file of men taking two or three Mexican prisoners to Gen'l. Houston. These were soldiers and had, whilst foraging, been captured by Sherman's men. They stated that they belonged to the division of the Mexican army encamped on the opposite side of the river; that said division was eight hundred strong, and commanded by General Siezma.

We found Col. Sherman encamped in the bottom about sixty yards from the river, along the bank of which, and opposite the ford, he had dug a ditch. In the rear of the camp was a dense cane-brake through which an opening had been cut to post sentinels. A prairie extended from the opposite bank of the river to the position of the enemy in the edge of the postoak woods. It was either on this or the following day (24th) that thirty or forty mounted men were sent from headquarters (crossing in a boat at Beason's) to reconnoitre the enemy's camp. They were unable, however, to approach very near it, as the enemy opened a fire on them with one or two small field pieces. A ravine nearly opposite our camp extended from the river for some distance in the direction of the enemy. At the head of this ravine Sherman posted a strong party of men and caused two or three horsemen to approach near the Mexicans, whose cavalry, it was hoped, would pursue our men and be drawn into the ambush. But the *ruse* did not succeed. The enemy could not be tempted to leave his camp. Very anxious were our men to be led against the enemy, who, it was confidently believed, was completely within our power. Daily, hourly, were orders expected for an attack. None doubted that we would be permitted to strike a blow, until the evening of the 26th, when Col. Sherman received an order from the commander-in-chief to break up his camp and retire toward San Felipe.<sup>1</sup> About sunset our little division (probably 250 men) was in motion. After marching six or

<sup>1</sup>News of the surrender of Col. Fannin's command reached the army before it retreated from the Colorado.



seven miles we lay down on our arms without fire. Early next morning, after sipping a little black coffee, the march was resumed. About an hour before noon we arrived at the San Bernardo, where we found and slaughtered a fat cow. While we were eating our roast beef, the main army arrived, but did not halt. Sherman's battalion, instead of joining the line of the marching column on the road, was thrown thirty or forty paces to its right, and had to march during the remainder of the day thro' the high grass. Soon after leaving the Bernard, Ben Fort Smith (Houston's adjt. gen'l) rode along for a few minutes near that part of our rank in which I marched, and conversed with some of us freely in regard to the policy of this second retreat. He found that we were much opposed to it, and strongly censured General Houston for his non-combative policy (and Smith doubtless knew that the whole army censured him) yet he (Smith) did not say a word in defense of the general, and, when something was said about depriving Houston of the command and electing some one in his place, Smith neither said aye nor nay to the suggestion; but remarked that he believed, and had always believed, that if God Almighty had intended him (Smith) for anything, it was for a military commander.

A little after dark, after having marched about twenty miles, the army encamped on Spring creek—a mile and a half west of San Felipe. Here, again, the fencing supplied us with fuel. On the morning of the 28th, Captain Baker's company was detached to remain at San Felipe, and the army again took up the line of march. Late in the afternoon it arrived at Mill creek (at a point three miles above Cummins's mill). Ere the army had crossed this stream it began to rain in torrents. As we marched through Mill creek bottom, floundering through mud and water and pelted by the pitiless storm, General Houston rode along slowly close to the company to which I belonged. He wore a black cloth dress coat, somewhat threadbare, which was rapidly absorbing the rain. He complained of having no blanket. He said he had had a very good one, but some scoundrel had stolen it from him. He then said, "My friends, I am told that evil disposed persons have reported that I am going to march you to the Redlands. This is false. I am going to march you into the Brazos bottom near Groce's, to a position where you can whip the enemy ten to one, and where we can get an abundant supply of corn from Lake creek." It was

after sunset when the army encamped about a mile north of Mill creek. It continued to rain heavily yet; some beeves were driven to camp and shot down and butchered amid the storm and darkness. An hour or two after night the rain ceased. Huge fires were soon blazing throughout the camp, and the process of roasting beef and drying blankets and clothing commenced, and continued until a late hour. This night Felix G. Wright, of Capt. McNutt's company, became suddenly very ill. Next day (29th), in consequence of having to open a road through a thicket for our baggage wagons, we marched only three miles, and encamped about midway between Cummins's mill and Piney creek. Here Wright died. Next morning (30th) we dug his grave in a little oak grove and, having consigned him, uncoffined, to his dark abode, resumed the march. Early in the evening (after marching 7 or 8 miles) the army encamped at Bracey's, near the edge of the Brazos bottom, and March 31st, sufficient space having been cleared in the bottom, near the margin of a large pond, we pitched our tents there. During the 12 or 13 days we remained in the bottom, it rained almost daily, in consequence of which our camp became extremely muddy and disagreeable. This added greatly to the discomfort of the sick, of whom there were many—nearly every tenth man, myself included, had the measles. Shortly after we moved into the bottom a new regiment was formed, of which Sherman was elected colonel. To fill his place in the first regiment Alexander Somervill was elected Lt. Col. The office of major in the first regt. having also become vacant, Capt. McNutt was elected to fill it. Gibson Kuykendall was elected captain of the company formerly commanded by McNutt. While we lay here, Garner, before spoken of, for various acts of insubordination, was tried by a court-martial and sentenced to be shot. He was taken to his grave and the whole army paraded to witness the execution of the sentence, when a reprieve from Gen'l. Houston was read. Very little sympathy was felt by anyone for Garner, as he was not only an insubordinate soldier, but a hardened villain.

About the 6th of April, the enemy arrived at San Felipe, and began to cannonade Capt. Baker's position on the east bank of the Brazos. Every cannon they fired was distinctly heard at our camp. A day or two afterwards, Col. Somervill returned from a visit to Capt. Baker's camp. He came to the tents of the company to which

I belonged and talked with the men; expressing himself strongly in disapprobation of the Fabian policy of the commander-in-chief. Should Gen'l. Houston persist in avoiding a conflict with the enemy, and continue to march the army eastward, as it was generally believed he intended to do,—he said he was in favor of depriving him of the command and supplying his place with a more belligerent leader, and wished to know whether our company favored such a course and would *take* it, should it become necessary. He was assured by both officers and men that he might rely upon their co-operation. I doubt not that Somervill and other officers sounded the whole army on this subject and received the same response. There was no injunction of secrecy—no one disguised his sentiments, and Gen'l Houston could not have been ignorant of what was in agitation. On the 12th, the army was ferried over the river (then very high) in the steamboat *Yellowstone*, and encamped a few hundred yards east of Groce's residence. Here we at length received what, since the beginning of the campaign had been a *desideratum*: namely, two beautiful, new, iron field pieces—the far-famed "Twin Sisters." Here we were also joined by Mirabeau B. Lamar and a few other volunteers from the United States. On the evening of the 14th the army was again put in motion. After marching about five miles it encamped near the residence of Mr. Donoho, whose rails were used for fuel. A great many fugitive families were encamped at and near this place. It was now ascertained that the enemy had effected the passage of the Brazos at Fort Bend, and his destination was presumed to be Harrisburg, the road to which place diverged from the one on which the army was marching about 16 or 17 miles east of Donoho's. The night of the 15th the army bivouacked at McCurley's. Early on the morning of the 16th a heavy shower of rain fell which delayed the advance of the army until nearly 10 o'clock A. M., when the march was resumed. All expected a scene at the forks of the road (a mile or two east of McCurley's), for it was generally agreed that, if the commander-in-chief did not order or permit the army to take the right-hand road, he was then and there to be deposed from its command. I do not believe that Gen'l Houston gave any order whatever as to which road should be followed, but when the head of the column reached the forks of the road it took the right-hand without being either bid or forbid.

During this day's march over a level, boggy prairie the wagon wheels often sank to their axles. Gen'l Houston once or twice dismounted and gave the teamsters "a lift." It was dark when we reached Burnett's on Cypress creek, where we encamped. The night of the 17th the army slept in the edge of the pine woods about six miles north of Harrisburg, and on the 18th, in the forenoon, encamped on the left bank of Buffalo bayou, less than eight hundred yards below the town of Harrisburg, which we found reduced to ashes. Deaf Smith having this morning captured and brought into camp two Mexicans, one of whom was a courier with dispatches for Santa [Anna], who, with a force of six hundred men was now ascertained to be somewhere down on the San Jacinto, and probably within a short day's march of our camp. The long cherished wish of our men to meet the enemy seemed likely to be speedily gratified. On the morning of the 19th an order was issued for every man to provide himself with three days ration preparatory to marching towards the enemy. This order was quickly followed by a notification to my brother, Capt. G. Kuykendall, that his company was detailed to remain at Camp Harrisburg to guard the sick and baggage. The small company of Capt. P. R. Splane was also detailed for the same service—all to be under the command of Major McNutt. As my brother's company was one of the first in the field, its detail to "keep camp" when there was a prospect of a fight seemed unfair. Cols. Burleson and Somervill and Sergt-Major Cleveland, at the request of my brother, urged Gen'l Houston to excuse said company from this service. The Gen'l refused to do so.<sup>1</sup> It was near noon when the army, about eight hundred

<sup>1</sup>There can be no doubt that Gen. Houston considered the camp near Harrisburg a post of danger. For some time during the morning, before the army marched away, Gen'l. Houston sat on a log, writing with a pencil. After the departure of the army one of our men picked up, at the spot where he had sat, his general orders, written in pencil in his own hand, in which it was stated that the artillery would remain for the defence of the camp near Harrisburg. I saw and read this paper myself. So did others who are still living. Furthermore, after the army was paraded to march, it was said in camp that Col. Neil remonstrated against this order, and the result was that the artillery accompanied the army. To the best of my recollection, the effective force left with Major McNutt did not exceed seventy-five men, towit: Kuykendall's company, forty-five; Splane's, twenty, and ten teamsters. Between the 19th and 21st, several small

strong, began the march for San Jacinto. After it crossed Buffalo bayou about three-fourths of a mile below our camp, we had no further communication with it until after the battle of San Jacinto. From the prisoners and dispatches taken on the 18th it was ascertained that a division of the enemy was on its march from the Brazos to join Santa Anna and must necessarily pass through Harrisburg, and within half a mile of our camp. Major McNutt had strict orders from General Houston not to show himself, and to act entirely on the defensive. As the bayou and a dense wood lay between us and the road, it was believed by the general that, if his orders were obeyed, it was not likely that the enemy would discover our camp.

Early in the forenoon of the 20th we were advised of the arrival of the enemy at Harrisburg by the sound of his bugle and gun. He made no halt, however, until he arrived at Sims's Bayou,<sup>1</sup> about a mile below Harrisburg, and only half that distance from our camp. Here he was delayed until night crossing the bayou, and as he evidently did not suspect our proximity, we could easily have surprised him; but in obedience to his orders, our commander suffered him to continue his march unmolested. This day two of our sick died and were buried without the customary military honors. We also heard some firing in the direction our army had marched, and inferred that it had fallen in with the enemy. Our anxiety to know the result was, of course, very great.

On the morning of the 21st, about half a dozen of our men were sent down the bayou to repair the boat in which our army had crossed. While they were at work, a party of the enemy, attracted by the sound of the axe and hammer, stole close to the opposite bank of the bayou and fired on them. Upon hearing the volley of musketry, Major McNutt instantly paraded his command. In a very short time one of the parties from the boat galloped into

squads of mounted men joined us, increasing our force to about 100 men. The sick and ineffectives numbered more than 150 (perhaps there were 200). Many years afterwards Major McNutt informed the writer that General Houston gave him secret instructions, in case he should be attacked and hard pressed by the enemy, to shoot the two Mexican prisoners and blow up the ammunition wagon.

<sup>1</sup>The division of the enemy was between five and six hundred strong—mostly infantry—and commanded by Gen. Cos.

camp with the intelligence of what had happened. He also brought behind him Henry Freid, of my brother's company, whose leg had been shattered by a musket ball. With the largest part of his command, Major McNutt marched rapidly down to the boat; but the enemy had become invisible, and in a few minutes we started back to camp, but ere we had proceeded half way, a brisk firing commenced on our left, about the crossing of Sims's Bayou. Heavy platoons of musketry followed each other in quick succession, interspersed with sharp reports of rifles. Several bullets sang along over our heads, some of them striking the pine trees and an old cabin on our right. The firing ceased before we reached camp, where we found that Roarer, the wagon master, taking advantage of the absence of the commander, had, with his teamsters (8 or 9) crossed the bayou and had gone to look for the enemy, whom he had doubtless found, and hence the firing. In a few minutes Roarer returned and reported that he had found a large party of the enemy encamped on the left bank of Sim's bayou, which he had attacked, and of whom he believed he had killed seven or eight without any loss on his part. Scarcely was this tale told when heavy firing again commenced in the direction of San Jacinto. For several minutes there was but a few seconds interval between the booming reports of the artillery, and those intervals were filled with the continuous roar of small arms. We now felt assured that the conflict of the day previous had not been decisive; but that now, indeed, had "come the tug of war." Of course we were greatly excited, yet we were very hopeful—nay, almost confident—of the success of our arms in the impending strife. Long after the cannon ceased to thunder we could still distinctly hear at irregular intervals rattling discharges of small arms. At length, near sunset, these reports also died away.

At the earnest entreaty of many of us, Major McNutt now determined to dispatch twenty-five or thirty men under Lt. Francis Miller to renew the attack on the party of the enemy at the crossing of Sims's bayou. Guided by Roarer, we began to move towards the camp of the enemy about dusk. Ere we had proceeded four hundred yards, the darkness, in consequence of the thick foliage of the magnolias, sweet bays, and other evergreens, became so great that there seemed some danger of losing our way. We continued, however, to advance slowly and silently until it was supposed

we were within two hundred yards of the enemy, when we were halted and told to lie down; our officers having determined to defer the attack until daybreak. We were too cold and too much excited to sleep. At early dawn we crept cautiously up to the Mexican camp—but alas, the bird had flown! The camp fires had nearly burned out and not a living thing was visible, save two or three wolfish looking dogs. One or two dead mules were floating in the bayou on the bank of which we found a sack of bacon and several bushels of corn in the ear. There was also a skiff in the bayou which had been used by the Mexicans in crossing. Observing a little mound of fresh earth on the opposite bank of the bayou, some of us went over to examine it. Scratching away the earth to the depth of five or six inches, we found the body of a man. I searched no further, but those who did, said they found three other human bodies in the same shallow grave. These bodies were probably the fruits of the previous evening's skirmish.

We were about to start back to our camp when we perceived a man riding towards us from below. When he arrived within two hundred yards of us he waved his hat over his head and shouted, "Huzza!" By this token we knew that he was the bearer of good news. In another minute that news was told. The battle of the evening before had crowned our arms with a complete and brilliant victory! *Then* such a shout went up as made the woods resound!

"O war, thou hast thy rude delight,  
Thy gleams of joy *intensely* bright."

Upon returning to camp we found that our friends had already received the glorious news. A day or two afterwards we moved down to the headquarters of our army, near the battle ground.

Postscript: Rohrer reported that the party of the enemy he fought were seventy-five strong. It is not probable, however, that there were more than forty, several of whom were camp followers. They belonged to the division of Gen. Cos, by whom, for some reason unknown, they were left at Sims's bayou.

VI.

*Labadie's Account of the Campaign.*

[The narrative from which these extracts are taken *passim* was published in the *Texas Almanac*, 1859, 40-64. It was written from his notes taken during the campaign by Dr. N. D. Labadie, who joined the army at Beason's. Its publication provoked Houston's speech in the United States Senate. (See *infra*, 317-25.)

*Summary:* Houston took command of about 400 men at Gonzales.

Two cannon and much baggage were destroyed when the retreat was begun, because there was not sufficient time to catch the grazing baggage animals. The picket was left unnotified of the retreat for the same reason.

The army at the Colorado numbered 1500 or 1600 men, but it began to decrease after news arrived of Fannin's defeat.

Moseley Baker and Wily Martin refused to follow Houston from San Felipe. Houston then ordered the former to guard the crossing at San Felipe, and the latter to guard that at Fort Bend.

The medical staff was organized at Groce's.

At Groce's there was much talk of electing a new commander for the volunteers.

Houston admitted that he had ordered a company from the East to halt at Robbins's Ferry, on the Trinity.

The army took the road to Harrisburg without any order from Houston, who sent R. M. Williamson to order the company on the Trinity to join him, since the army had now changed its course.

Deaf Smith *cut down* Vince's Bridge.

During the battle of San Jacinto, Houston ordered a halt, but Rusk countermanded it.]

Previous to General Houston's arrival, some 400 men had assembled at Gonzales, and placed themselves under the command of Colonel Neill, where they remained for some days, anxiously waiting the arrival of reinforcements sufficient to justify the attempt to cut their way into the Alamo.

About the 11th or 12th of March, General Houston arrived and assumed command. On the following day the first regiment was organized by electing the following officers: Burleson, colonel; Sherman, lieutenant-colonel; Summerville, major. A camp was formed on the east bank of the Guadalupe, just below the town. That night news was brought into camp by an old Mexican of the fall of the Alamo; on the following day this sad news was fully con-



firmed by the arrival of Mrs. Dickinson and child, and two negro men-servants of Travis and Almonte. They brought information to the effect that 3000 of the enemy would camp on the Cibolo that night. Immediately on receiving that information, Houston ordered a retreat. Two cannon that had been procured were thrown into the Guadalupe river, tents and camp baggage were burnt, as there was no way of transporting them in consequence of the great haste to get off, and it being extremely dark, but few of the horses of the small number they had could be found. In fact, the haste was so great that the picket-guard that had been posted two or three miles west of the river were not called in. There were many families left in the rear also. About 12 o'clock at night the army commenced the retreat; at daylight next morning, it reached Peach creek, about ten miles distant, where they halted to rest and get breakfast. While there, heavy explosions were heard, which proved to be the blowing up of liquors left in the stores, the town having been set on fire by parties left behind. \* \* \*

The army resumed its march towards noon, and continued until it reached Burnham's on the Colorado, where it crossed the river and marched down to a point opposite Beason's; here it made a halt for several days. In the meantime, General Sesma formed a camp on the west bank, where the town of Columbus is now situated. His command did not exceed 800 men. While the army lay at this point troops were constantly coming in, until the Texas army, in a few days, increased to fifteen or sixteen hundred men.

THE LIBERTY COMPANY ORGANIZE AND JOIN THE ARMY. \* \* \*  
Having arrived at Roberts', \* \* \* an express rides up giving us the sad tidings of the fall of the Alamo, \* \* \* and the retreat of General Houston, after having set fire to Gonzales.  
\* \* \*

A DISTRESSING SPECTACLE. On reaching the Brazos bottom, the spectacle we witnessed was agonizing and well calculated to discourage the stoutest heart. The road was filled with carts and wagons loaded with women and children, while other women, for whom there was no room in the wagons, were seen walking, some of them barefoot, some carrying their smaller children in their arms or on their backs, their other children following barefooted; and other women were again seen with but one shoe, having lost the

other in the mud; some of the wagons were broken down; and others again were bogged in the deep mud. \* \* \*

ARRIVAL AT SAN FELIPE. The bottoms presented an uninterrupted succession of such sights, till we reached the ferry opposite San Felipe. \* \* \* Having arrived at Beason's Ferry on the Colorado, we there found General Houston with the army encamped, to whom we reported ourselves 20th March. \* \* \*

During one week while we were encamped on the Colorado, our army increased by daily arrivals from about 600 to 1600 men. In this I know I am correct, as we paraded every day, which gave me an opportunity of making a record of the numbers on the ground, and I made the entry in my journal.

NEWS OF FANNIN'S DEFEAT. \* \* \* Meantime, \* \* \* the painful news of Fannin's defeat was brought into camp by one Peter Carr, whom Houston treated as a spy, putting him under guard. We all, however, believed his report to be true, and it was corroborated by others the next day, after which the numbers in our camp began to diminish rapidly.

EXPEDITION UNDER CARNES. Meantime Gen. Sezma had pitched his camp on the opposite or west bank, and about one mile from the river, and Captain Carnes was authorized to raise a mounted company to cross over and reconnoitre the position of the enemy. \* \* \* Having thus failed in our purpose, we recrossed the river about dark, and having recovered our horses with some difficulty, and having lost most of our provisions, we mounted and returned towards the camp, and reaching it, lo! we found it entirely deserted.

THE RETREAT FROM THE COLORADO. We at once perceived that Houston had commenced his retreat. \* \* \* Finding the army had left, we had nothing to do but to follow, and we did so as well as we could in the night. \* \* \* Many of us declared it was necessary to have a better leader, and that, if we could do no better, we would elect some one better fitted to command. At near day-break we came up with the army at the spring Gen. Houston had named to me. \* \* \* The retreat was continued through this day, and at night we reached the place of Mr. S. M. Williams, about two miles from San Felipe. \* \* \* As Houston had decided on marching up the river some twenty miles opposite Col. Groce's plantation, on giving orders to that effect, Sherman found two com-

panies refused to come into line, and he sent a message to that effect to Houston, who had gone in advance with his staff, when he immediately sent back Col. Hockley to Sherman to put the army in motion, saying, if subordinate commanders were going to disobey orders, the sooner it was ascertained the better. One of the companies was commanded by Capt. Moseley Baker, the other either by Wiley Martin or Bird. The army had not marched far, when Gen. Houston sent an order to Baker to defend the crossing at San Felipe, and to Martin to defend that at Fort Bend. Subsequently Baker set fire to San Felipe and then took his position on the opposite bank of the river, where he defended the crossing till he found the main army was retreating, and then abandoned it. Baker afterwards asserted that he burnt San Felipe by order of Gen. Houston, but the latter denied it. The enemy afterwards finding the crossing at San Felipe defended by Baker, diverged and went down to Fort Bend, the crossing at which place Martin was unable to defend, and there they crossed over.

CAMP AT GROCE'S FERRY—SAN FELIPE BURNED, ETC. Our camp was pitched near a deep ravine. \* \* \* In relation to the burning of San Felipe, I may here remark that on one occasion, in company with J. N. Moreland, I visited Gen. Houston, whom we found lying in his tent. Turning towards us he said: "Moreland, did you ever hear me give orders to burn the town of San Felipe?" His reply was: "General, I have no recollection of it." "Yet they blame me for it," said Houston. \* \* \*

SICKNESS IN CAMP—REORGANIZATION, ETC. While our army lay thus encamped in the Brazos swamp, using stagnant water from the old bed of the river, a great deal of sickness prevailed among the men, which caused serious alarm. It was then deemed proper to organize the army on the best possible plan, and many promotions were made. \* \* \* It was here also that the medical staff was organized, April 6th. To Dr. Phelps was assigned the hospital, which for some weeks before had been kept on Groce's plantation, where a few sick had been sent. Dr. Ewing received the appointment of surgeon-general, and by him Dr. Bower and the writer were appointed surgeons of the first regiment of regulars. The surgeons of the volunteer regiments were appointed by their respective commanders. Burleson of the 1st regiment appointed Doctors Davidson and Fitzhugh, and Sherman of the 2nd regiment

appointed Doctors Anson Jones (late President Jones), and Booker. \* \* \*

Owing to the state of inactivity and the increase of diarrhoea in the army, great discontent and murmuring were manifested among all the officers and men. \* \* \*

SANTA ANNA'S CHALLENGE—TALK OF SUPERSEDING HOUSTON. Meantime the feeling of discontent increased. The news of the burning of San Felipe, of the advance of Santa Anna in person, of his reaching San Felipe and Fort Bend, rendered our men impatient of this delay. \* \* \* Colonel Sidney Sherman had been elected colonel of the second regiment, to which the Liberty company belonged, and while all were saying it was time to be doing something besides lying in idleness and getting sick, upon hearing this challenge, it was declared to be necessary that the army should have another commander, and Colonel Sherman was pointed out as the man best calculated to meet the emergency. This came to the ears of General Houston, who at once caused notices to be written and stuck on trees with wooden pegs, to the effect that the first man who should beat for volunteers, should be court-martialed and shot. One of these notices was pinned to a hickory tree not six feet from the tent of the Liberty company, and Colonel Lynch and others pointed it out to me. J. N. Moreland (who was a strong friend to the commander), and Major Ben Smith and Dr. Ewing, all came to us and desired that no such step, as that spoken of, should be taken, as there was no doubt the camp would break up in a few days.

ROBBIN'S FERRY—ARRIVAL OF THE "TWIN SISTERS." The next day some one from the Red Lands arrived and reported that a company from that section had reached Robbins' ferry on the Trinity, where it had halted, as Mr. Robbins stated it to be the wish of the commander that the company should proceed no farther to the west. In reply, Houston said, in my presence, it was right, and that it was his order for the company to stop there. About this time news came to us that two pieces of artillery had been landed at Harrisburg and would reach the camp within five days. It was this, mainly, that put an end to the movement of beating up for a volunteer commander. \* \* \*

THE CAMP AT GROCE'S BREAKS UP AND CROSSES THE RIVER. Having now possession of these two four-pound pieces, preparations

for the march were at once made, and the whole army soon crossed on the Yellowstone without difficulty. I believe the crossing was commenced on the 12th, and I know it was completed on the 13th and 14th, as my journal is to that effect. \* \* \* The next day, on the 15th, the army marched six miles to Mr. Donohoe's place, and then camped. While the companies were taking the ground allotted them, I observed Captain Moseley Baker (who had just joined us), apparently much absorbed in thought. As Gen. Houston came up he said to him: "General, according to your orders, I have retreated with my company, which is now encamped in good order, three miles above." Then came Captain Martin who said: "General, I have brought but my sword; my company has disbanded. On hearing that you were retreating to Nacogdoches, they declared they would no longer bear arms, but would protect their families, and they have therefore all dispersed." I was then standing within four or five steps of General Houston, and I asked Capt. Baker if his company was on the road to Robbins' ferry. "They are on that road," said he. "But," said I, "are you and your men willing to retreat there?" \* \* \* "No, never, never!" said he; "for if Gen. Houston will not take us to meet the enemy, we will elect a commander who will." This he said in a loud voice, so that Gen. Houston heard it, and turned to us with a nod, and then, finishing his conversation with Capt. Martin, he passed by us suddenly and began cursing the men for taking the fence for firewood. \* \* \*

SICKNESS—DOUBTS AS TO WHICH ROAD WOULD BE TAKEN. The next day, 16th, brought the army to near Mr. Roberts' place, and here a heavy Texas rain poured upon us. \* \* \*

Owing to the conflicting opinions as to which road the army was to take after reaching Mr. Roberts', where it forked, I wanted to satisfy myself on that point, and went to Major Ben Smith, for information. He replied to my inquiry that it was his opinion the army would continue straight on and cross the Trinity at Robbins' ferry. As many were unwilling to go on that road, a halt was expected to be made at Roberts', and as we neared that point (17th April), the writer, with three or four others, galloped to near the advance guard, the captain of which told us he had received no orders, but would go between the two roads. As Gen. Houston was now coming up, several of us desired Mr. Roberts, who was standing on his gate, to point out to all—the road to Harrisburg. Gen.

Houston was then close by, when Roberts raised his hand, and, elevating his voice, cried out: "That right hand road will carry you to Harrisburg just as straight as a compass." A shout was then raised: "To the right, boys, to the right." The whole line was fast closing up as the music had stopped; but upon hearing the shout from the men, the music proceeded to the right. The advance guard, then a quarter of a mile ahead, between the two roads, seeing the music take the right, wheeled also to the right; and then loud and joyous shouts followed in succession. \* \* \*

MRS. MANN AND HER OXEN. Here I first discovered my medicine cart was missing, when I learned that owing to some difficulty with Mrs. Mann about her oxen, it had been left behind. \* \* \* I reached the spot just in time to see Mrs. Mann driving off her yoke of oxen. \* \* \* She said she had loaned her oxen to Gen. Houston to go as far as the ferry on the Trinity, but, as the army had changed its course, she said she would be d—d if the general should have her oxen any longer. \* \* \*

MARCH CONTINUED TO HARRISBURG, ETC. Some six miles further on our march, I observed "Three-legged Willie" galloping up to Gen. Houston. \* \* \* Gen. Houston then ordered him to go with all possible speed to the Red Land company, with directions that they should join the army, as it had now changed its course to Harrisburg. \* \* \* We arrived at Harrisburg about noon, when the smoke at the town told us too plainly to be mistaken, that the enemy had been there before us, and set fire to its buildings. After camping a little below, our spy, Deaf Smith, found means to cross the bayou with a few others; and about 8 o'clock that night, he came back, bringing captive a Mexican express carrier with a pair of deerskin saddlebags full of documents for Santa Anna. These saddlebags had belonged to Travis and had his name upon them. \* \* \* Accordingly the balance of the cavalry joined the main army next morning and crossed Buffalo bayou below the mouth of Sims'. The next day at Bray's bayou, a flat boat was found loaded with corn meal, etc., intended for the division under General Cos, but we found those supplies quite as acceptable to us as they could have been to Cos. By dusk that day the army had all crossed over, Dr. Phelps having been left to attend to some ten or twelve who were sick with the diarrhoea. \* \* \*

SPEECHES TO THE ARMY. \* \* \* Before crossing the bayou,

General Houston made us an animated speech, towards the conclusion of which he said: "The army will cross, and we will meet the enemy." \* \* \*

THE MARCH AND SKIRMISH OF THE 20TH. \* \* \* The spies reported that only the advance guard of the enemy was in sight. Upon examining our rifles we found that they required fresh priming, and then one after another discharged his gun for the purpose of loading afresh. \* \* \* Gen. Houston, who had all along been silent now raised his stentorian voice, crying: "Stop that firing, \* \* \*." Some of us said, "Our guns have been loaded over two weeks, and we will not meet the enemy with them wet," and then, right before his face, bang goes another, and still another. By this time \* \* \* holding his drawn sword, he declared he would run through the first man that would fire. One man, close by myself, said, "General, it won't do for you to try that game on us"; and with the most perfect indifference he fires his rifle as he spoke. The general then gave it up. \* \* \*

SOME TORIES DISCOVERED. We soon discovered some men on the hills beyond Lynchburg, whom we took to be a reinforcement coming from the east. \* \* \* It was found out that they were some of the Texas tories, and had come to pilot Santa Anna across to the Sabine. \* \* \* These men, finding they had mistaken the Texian for the Mexican army, made a hasty retreat and disappeared.

THE FIRST SKIRMISHING. [On the 20th]. \* \* \* As I went along, I met Col. G. W. Hockley, who was handing a letter to an express, saying to him: "Get all the axes in camp, and bring the flat boat down tonight." \* \* \* After he had left the purpose was well understood, to cut trees to enable the army to cross; but the men declared that not a tree should be cut down, but that they would give battle at once. \* \* \*

DARING ATTACK BY SHERMAN AND LAMAR. \* \* \* About 4 o'clock in the evening Col. Sherman asked General Houston's permission to call for mounted volunteers to take their cannon. \* \* \* General Houston reluctantly consented; but before Col. S. could get his men ready for the attack (about seventy having volunteered, among them were Cols. Lamar and Handy), the enemy withdrew their cannon, leaving their cavalry in the prairie. Sherman immediately charged them and drove them back under the

guns of their main body. The Texians, being composed mostly of riflemen mounted for the purpose, were compelled to fall back and dismount, to reload their long rifles. The enemy perceiving their condition \* \* \* dashed down upon them, forcing them to defend themselves as best they could until they were again in their saddles, when they forced the enemy back the second time. In the meantime Santa Anna \* \* \* ordered out several hundred infantry to cut off the retreat of the Texians. \* \* \* While in this situation, Sherman sent Major Wells to bring up Col. Willard's command of regulars, which had been promised him by Houston. \* \* \* Wells soon returned with the mortifying intelligence that Willard's orders had been countermanded. \* \* \* Of course the Texians were compelled to retreat. \* \* \* Thus ended the skirmishing of the 20th. \* \* \*

The number of our men in camp was quite small, \* \* \* now estimated at less than 800. \* \* \*

REINFORCEMENTS TO THE ENEMY. \* \* \* Our spies reported a large number of mules in sight, with pack saddles on. And now there was a general murmur, for most agreed that it was a reinforcement to the enemy. \* \* \* Deaf Smith passed by me, remarking, "\* \* \* the enemy is increasing." \* \* \* Many became clamorous and murmurs were heard to the effect that: "The delays of our commander are continually adding strength to the enemy, and diminishing our own. \* \* \* Today we *must* fight, or never." As this long string of mules disappeared, Deaf Smith \* \* \* remarked: "They have traveled over our track. The bridge at Vince's ought to be burnt down. I will see the general." \* \* \* And two minutes after he rides up to me saying: "\* \* \* The general thinks it a good plan." \* \* \* At about two o'clock he returned and I asked him how he had succeeded. He said: "I first fired it; but it would not burn; and I then cut away a few timbers and made it fall into the bayou." About ten that morning, Col. Wharton visited every mess in camp, and slapping his hands together, he spoke loud and quick: "Boys, there is no other word today but fight, fight! Now is the time!" Every man was eager for it, but all feared another disappointment, as the commander still showed no disposition whatever to lead the men out. \* \* \* Over one-half of the men paraded, expecting orders, but, up to noon, nothing could be



decided; yet the desire of the men only increased the more, until finally Houston said to Wharton: "Fight and be damned." This was enough. Wharton again went among them to prepare them, telling them the order had been given at last. \* \* \* It was past three o'clock when all the arrangements were finally concluded. \* \* \* We found the enemy somewhat unprepared for us at that hour. \* \* \*

HOUSTON ORDERS A HALT. On a sudden a halt is made in obedience to an order. Upon which, Rusk shouts to the top of his voice: "If we stop, we are cut to pieces. Don't stop—go ahead." \* \* \*

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## VII.

### *Houston's Speech in the United States Senate.*

[This speech was delivered by General Houston in the United States Senate February 28, 1859, and pretends to be a reply to Labadie's account of the San Jacinto campaign, published in the *Texas Almanac* for 1859. (See *supra*, 307-16). It may be found entire in the *Congressional Globe*, 1859, pp. 1433-39. These extracts are taken *passim* from a reprint in the *Texas Almanac*, 1860, 18-35.

*Summary:* When Houston took command of the army at Gonzales, it numbered 374.

The General placed his baggage wagons at the disposal of the citizens of Gonzales, reserving only one for the transportation of the army, baggage and ammunition.

Gonzales was burned by the rear guard, without instructions.

The general retreated from the Colorado, because he knew that one battle must "decide the fate of Texas," and that if many were wounded there, he would have to sacrifice the army to the wounded, since he had no means of transporting them.

At San Felipe there was a spirit of dissatisfaction in the troops.

At Groce's the general's "efficient" force was 520 men. He would have attempted to surprise Santa Anna at San Felipe, but the swollen condition of the Brazos prevented.

The army took the Harrisburg road at the fork without an order from anybody.

The army which marched from Harrisburg numbered a "little over 700."

A council of war was called at about 12 o'clock on the 21st. The question submitted was, "Shall we attack the enemy in their position, or await their attack in ours?" The council decided to await the attack of the

enemy; but the general determined, notwithstanding their decision, to take the offensive.

Houston alone conceived the idea of destroying Vince's bridge.]

\* \* \* The general proceeded on his way and met many fugitives. The day on which he left Washington, the 6th of March, the Alamo had fallen. He anticipated it and marching to Gonzales as soon as practicable, though his health was infirm, he arrived there on the 11th of March. He found at Gonzales three hundred and seventy-four men, half-fed, half-clad, and half-armed, and without organization. That was the nucleus on which he had to form an army and defend the country. No sooner did he arrive than he sent a dispatch to Col. Fannin, fifty-eight miles, which would reach him in thirty hours, to fall back. He was satisfied that the Alamo had fallen. Col. Fannin was ordered to fall back from Goliad, twenty-five miles, to Victoria, on the Guadalupe, thus placing him within striking distance of Gonzales, for he had only to march twenty-five miles to Victoria to be on the east side of the Colorado, with the only succor hoped for by the general. \* \* \*

Under these circumstances, the confirmation of the fall of the Alamo reached the general. Was it policy to give battle there against an overwhelming force, flushed with victory and the massacre of the Alamo? Was it wisdom in him to put upon the hazard of a die, three hundred and seventy-four men, in the condition in which his troops were, against ten thousand choice, victorious troops of Mexico, backed by a nation of eight million people, when he had only to rely upon the voluntary casualties that might exist to sustain him? What did he do when he first went there? He ordered every wagon but one to be employed in transporting the women and children from the town of Gonzales, and had only four oxen and a single wagon, as he believed, to transport all the baggage and munitions of war belonging to Texas at that point. That was all he had left. He had provided for the women and children. \* \* \*

Though the news of the fall of the Alamo arrived at eight or nine o'clock at night, that night, by eleven o'clock the commander-in-chief had everything in readiness to march, though panic raged, and frenzy seized upon many; and though it took all his personal influence to resist the panic and bring them to composure, with all the encouragement he could use, he succeeded. An example of

composure himself, he at last got the excitement allayed; but not until twenty-five persons had deserted and carried panic with them to the eastern section of the country, as far as the Sabine, announcing the fall and massacre of the Alamo, and the massacre of the troops. He fell back, but fell back in good order.

An incident that I will mention, of the most unpleasant character, occurred on leaving Gonzales. On that night, about twelve miles from there, it was announced to the general that the Mexicans would suffer; that a barrel of gin and a barrel of wine had been poisoned with arsenic, and that, as they came to consume it, it would destroy them. I presume no man ever had such feelings of horror at a deed being perpetrated of this kind, \* \* \* but, fortunately, the rear guard, without direction, set fire to the place on leaving it. \* \* \*

At Peach creek, fifteen miles from Gonzales, he met a reinforcement of one hundred and twenty-five men, but out of these one hundred and twenty-five men, ere morning twenty-five had again deserted, owing to the terrible details that were brought of the massacre of the Alamo. With that addition his force only amounted to four hundred and seventy-four men that remained with him. The next day he met a detachment of thirty-five men, and anticipating that he would make a stand at the Colorado, as he found it impossible to make a stand at Gonzales, appointed an aide-de-camp, Major William T. Austin, and dispatched him for artillery to the mouth of the Brazos for the purpose of enabling him, on arriving at the Colorado, to make a stand—for he had not a single piece of ordnance, not a cartridge, or a ball. The aide-de-camp departed with the assurance that within seven or eight days he would have it on the Colorado, at Beason's. In the meantime, and to show that the general was not a fugitive, or that he was not disposed to expose anyone to hazard, he was informed on the Navidad, fifteen miles from the Colorado, that a blind woman, with six children, had been passed by, as she was not residing on the road, but off at a distance. He immediately ordered two of his aides-de-camp, with a company of men, to go and bring her up. \* \* \* He then halted at the Colorado four days, until the last hoof and the last human being that was a fugitive had passed over. He had permitted none to remain behind exposed to the ruthless enemy.

There he remained [at Beason's] until the news of Fannin's disaster came. \* \* \*

The general fell back from the Colorado. The artillery had not yet arrived. He had every reason to believe that the check given to General Sesma, opposite to his camp on the west bank of the Colorado, would induce him to send for reinforcements, and that Fannin having been massacred, a concentration of the enemy would necessarily take place, and that an overwhelming force would soon be upon him. He knew that one battle must be decisive of the fate of Texas. If he fought a battle and many of his men were wounded, he could not transport them, and he would be compelled to sacrifice the army to the wounded. He determined to fall back, and did so, and on falling back received an accession of three companies that had been ordered from the mouth of the Brazos. He heard no word of the artillery, for none had reached there, nor did it ever start for the army; and it was years before he knew that his orders had been countermanded, and his aide-de-camp withdrawn from him. \* \* \* He [the general] marched and took possession on the Brazos, with as much expedition as was consistent with his situation; but at San Felipe he found a spirit of dissatisfaction in the troops. The government had removed east. It had left Washington and gone to Harrisburg, and the apprehension of the settlers had been awakened and increased rather than decreased. The spirits of the men were bowed down. Hope seemed to have departed, and with the little band alone remained anything like a consciousness of strength.

At San Felipe objection was made to marching up the Brazos. It was said that settlements were down below and persons interested were there. The oxen could not be found for the march in the morning, of a certain company. The general directed that they should follow as soon as the oxen were collected. He marched up the Brazos, and crossing Mill creek, encamped there. An express was sent to him, asking his permission for that company to go down the Brazos to Fort Bend, and to remain there. Knowing it arose from a spirit of sedition, he granted that permission, and they marched down. On the Brazos the efficient force under his command amounted to five hundred and twenty. He remained there from the last of March until the 13th of April. On his arrival at the Brazos, he found that the rains had been excessive. He had no

means of operating against the enemy. They marched to San Felipe, within eighteen miles of him, and would have been liable to surprise at any time had it not been for the high waters of the Brazos, which prevented him from marching upon them by surprise. Thus, he was pent up. The portion of the Brazos in which he was became an island. The water had not been for years so high.

On arriving at the Brazos, he found that the *Yellowstone*, a very respectable steamboat, had gone up the river for the purpose of transporting cotton. She was seized by order of the general, to enable him, if necessary, to pass the Brazos at any moment, and was detained with a guard on board. \* \* \* The general had taken every precaution possible to prevent the enemy from passing the Brazos below. He had ordered every craft to be destroyed on the river. \* \* \* But by a *ruse*, they obtained the only boat that was in that part of the country where a command was stationed. \* \* \* And thus Santa Anna obtained an opportunity of transporting his artillery and army across the Brazos. \* \* \* The encampment on the Brazos was the point at which the first piece of artillery was ever received by the army. \* \* \* Two small six-pounders, presented by the magnanimity of the people of Cincinnati, and subsequently called the "Twin Sisters," were the first pieces of artillery that were used in Texas. From thence, the march commenced at Donoho's, three miles from Groce's. It had required several days to cross the Brazos, with the horses and wagons.

General Rusk had arrived in camp on the 4th of April. He was then Secretary of War—Colonel Rusk—and as a friend of the commander-in-chief, he was received. He was superseded,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Thomas was acting Secretary of War. \* \* \* The commander-in-chief camped, three miles from the Brazos timber, and with unusual vigilance preserved the forces together, only a few deserting. They were then east of the Brazos and the settlements were east of them. \* \* \* The road from San Felipe, situated below the army on the Brazos, led to eastern Texas on the Sabine. The road to Harrisburg crossed it at right angles, going south. The general had provided a guide acquainted with the country, as it was a portion in

<sup>1</sup>Rusk was not superseded.—E. C. B.

which he had never been. \* \* \* As the troops filed out in the direction of Harrisburg, without an intimation being given to any one, two companies that had been stationed at San Felipe and below that on the Brazos, and ordered to concentrate at Donoho's, arrived. The officers were sullen and refractory; they had "not eaten."

\* \* \* At that moment a negro came up, and said he had been made a prisoner by the Mexicans and was released, and announced the fact that Santa Anna had crossed the Brazos, and was marching to Harrisburg. These companies were ordered into line. One of them obeyed; the other objected to going, as they had no refreshments. The whole management, and the entire responsibility of every movement at that time devolved upon the general. He told the refractory captain, whom he had known for many years, to march directly to the Trinity and protect the women and children, if the Indians should prove turbulent; and at all events to kill beef for them, and see that their supplies were sufficient. The general acted upon no orders given to him during the campaign; but assumed the sole responsibility of all his acts.

\* \* \* The remarkable success of the march brought the army in a little time to Harrisburg, opposite which it halted. Deaf Smith—known as such—his proper name was Erasmus<sup>1</sup> Smith—had gone over by rafts with other spies, and, after crossing, arrested two couriers and brought them into camp. Upon them was found a buckskin wallet containing dispatches of General Filisola to General Santa Anna, as well as from Mexico, and thereby we were satisfied that Santa Anna had marched to San Jacinto with the *elite* of his army, and we resolved to push on. Orders were given by the general immediately to prepare rations for three days, and to be at an early hour in readiness to cross the bayou. The next morning we find that the commander-in-chief addressed a note in pencil to Henry Raguet, of Nacogdoches, in these words:

CAMP AT HARRISBURG, April 19, 1836.

"SIR: This morning we are in preparation to meet Santa Anna. It is the only chance of saving Texas. From time to time I have looked for reinforcements in vain. The convention adjourning to Harrisburg struck *panic* throughout the country. Texas could have started at least four thousand men. We will only have about

<sup>1</sup>It was really *Erastus*.—E. C. B.

seven hundred to march with, besides the camp guard. We go to conquer. It is wisdom, growing out of necessity, to meet the enemy now; every consideration enforces it. No previous occasion would justify it." \* \* \*

This letter was signed by the commander-in-chief.

A crossing was effected by the evening, and the line of march was taken up. The force amounted to a little over seven hundred men. The camp guard remained opposite Harrisburg. \* \* \* The army \* \* \* took up the line of march for San Jacinto, for the purpose of cutting off Santa Anna below the junction of the San Jacinto and Buffalo Bayou. It was necessary for Santa Anna to cross the San Jacinto to unite with the Mexicans in Nacogdoches county, and incite the Indians to war. Santa Anna had provided a boat through the instrumentality of Texans who had joined him, and was in readiness to cross. He had marched down to New Washington, some seven or eight miles below the San Jacinto, and was returning to take up his march eastward. After sunrise sometime, the army having halted to slaughter beeves and refresh, the signal was given that our scouts had encountered those of the enemy; eating was suspended, everything packed, and we were on the march. We marched down to the ferry of San Jacinto and then halted. \* \* \*

\* \* \* The enemy, within about three hundred yards, I think, took position with their artillery and infantry, and opened fire from a twelve-pounder. It continued until evening. At length Santa Anna ordered his infantry to advance. They were advancing when our artillery was ordered to fire upon them; \* \* \* they returned in such haste and confusion to their encampment that it inspirited our troops, and caused the welkin to ring. \* \* \*

In the evening, the general ordered a reconnoitering party under Colonel Sherman, to reconnoiter; but they were ordered not to go within the fire of the enemy's guns, or to provoke an attack. \* \* \* No sooner was he out of sight than a firing commenced, with a view, as Sherman himself declared, of bringing on a general action, in violation of the general's orders. Confusion was the result of it. \* \* \* This was done in direct violation of the general's orders; for it was not his intention to bring on a general action that day. The guards that night were doubled. The next day, about nine o'clock, troops were discovered advancing

along the prairie ridge in the direction of the Mexican encampment, which produced some excitement. The general, not wishing the impression to be received that they were reinforcements, suggested that it was a *ruse* of the Mexicans; that they were the same troops that were seen yesterday; that they were marching around the swell of the prairie for the purpose of display because they were apprehensive of an attack by the Texans. He sent out two spies secretly—Deaf Smith and Karnes—upon their track, with directions to report to him privately. They did so, and reported that the reinforcements the enemy had thus received amounted to five hundred and forty.

Things remained without any change until about twelve o'clock, when the general was asked to call a council of war. No council of war had ever been solicited before. It seemed strange to him. \* \* \* The council was called, however, consisting of six field officers and the Secretary of War. The proposition was put to the council, "Shall we attack the enemy in position or receive their attack in ours?" The two junior officers—for such is the way of taking the sense of courts in the army—were in favor of attacking the enemy in position. The four seniors, and the Secretary of War, who spoke, said, that "to attack veteran troops with raw militia is a thing unheard of; to charge upon the enemy without bayonets, in an open prairie, had never been known; our situation is strong; in it we can whip all Mexico." Understanding this as the sense of the council, the general dismissed them. \* \* \*

In the morning the sun had risen brightly, and he determined, with this omen, "Today the battle shall take place." In furtherance of that, \* \* \* he sent for the commissary-general, Colonel Forbes, and ordered him to procure two axes, and place them at a particular tree, which he designated in the margin of the timber. He sent for Deaf Smith, and told him at his peril, not to leave the camp that day without orders; that he would be wanted, and for him to select a companion in whom he had unbounded reliance. His orders were obeyed. After the council was dismissed the general sent for Deaf Smith and his comrade, Reeves, who came mounted, when he gave them the axes so as not to attract the attention of the troops. \* \* \*

\* \* \* The general announced to them: "You will be speedy if you return in time for the scenes that are to be enacted here."



They executed the order, and when the troops with the general were within sixty yards of the enemy's front, when charging, Deaf Smith returned and announced that the bridge was cut down. It had been preconcerted to announce that the enemy had received no reinforcement. It was announced to the army for the first time; for the idea that the bridge would be cut down was never thought of by any one but the general himself, until he ordered it to be done, and then only known to Smith and his comrade. It would have made the army polemics if it had known that Vince's bridge was to be destroyed, for it cut off all means of escape for either army. There was no alternative but victory or death. \* \* \* It has been denied that the bridge was cut down by order of the general. It was said to be the promptings of Deaf Smith. \* \* \* It was announced in the official report of the battle, in which the commanding general says: \* \* \* "having in the meantime ordered the bridge on the only road communicating with the Brazos, distant eight miles from our encampment, to be destroyed, thus cutting off all possibility of escape." \* \* \*

"I ordered them," is the language that is used in the official report of the general, that has remained uncontroverted until this time. \* \* \*

\* \* \* But, Mr. President, it is proper to remark, that previous to the order for the demolition of the bridge, and during the early part of the day, two officers came to the commander-in-chief and asked him if it would not be well to construct a bridge across the bayou, immediately opposite the encampment, which was, perhaps, some seventy or hundred yards wide at tide water. The general, to get rid of them remarked, "Is there material?" and told them to see. They went, and after returning, reported that by demolishing Governor Zavala's house, a bridge might be constructed. The general observed to them that other arrangements might suit better, and cast them off. So soon as the general supposed the bridge destroyed or cut down, he ordered Colonel Bennett to go around to the captains and men of Sherman's regiment to see what their spirits were; whether they were cheerful, and whether he thought them desirous for a battle. Colonel Bennett reported favorably. They were ordered to parade. \* \* \*

With the exception of the commander-in-chief, no gentleman in the army had ever been in a general action, or even witnessed one.

\* \* \* The commander-in-chief requested the Secretary of War to take command of the left wing. \* \* \* About all the silly and scandalous charges made against the general as to ordering a halt during the action, and after he was wounded, leaving the field, \* \* \* I will, as authority, refer to the report of the Secretary of War, Gen. Rusk, and see what he says in relation to that. In this report to the President, *ad interim*, he says:

“Major-General Houston acted with great gallantry, encouraging his men to the attack, and heroically charged, in front of the infantry, within a few yards of the enemy, receiving at the same time a wound in his leg. \* \* \*”

From this time no hostile gun was fired. The last detachment of the enemy immediately surrendered. \* \* \*

They have charged the commander-in-chief with having more troops than he reported. Seven hundred on the Colorado was the number, according to the statement of Colonel Burleson, as he supposed; the general-in-chief never reported more than six hundred and thirty-two; his efficient force never exceeded over seven hundred troops at any one point. \* \* \* But by cutting off their retreat, by the commander-in-chief's own design of destroying the bridge, and leading his troops into action at the proper time, he secured for Texas all that wisdom and valor could have done, whether he exercised them or not.

The commander-in-chief \* \* \* never received an order from the Secretary of War. \* \* \* He never intimated that he would march towards the Trinity, but gave orders to the troops to unite at Donoho's. \* \* \*

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## VIII.

### *Burnet's Narrative of the Campaign.*

[These extracts are taken *passim* from “A Compendium of the History of Texas,” in the *Texas Almanac*, 1860, 50-67. The compendium runs through the *Almanac* from 1857 to 1862, and though anonymous, it is well established that it was written by David G. Burnet, the first president of the Republic of Texas. This installment was a reply to Houston's speech of February 28, 1859, in the United States Senate. (See *supra*, 317-25.)

*Summary:* Houston had more than 400 men at Gonzales.

When the retreat commenced the pickets were left out unnotified, and the only two cannon were thrown into the river.

The retreat from Gonzales was "an absolute necessity."

The Texan army at Beason's was from 1200 to 1500 strong.

While Houston was at Groce's, General Rusk was sent to him by the cabinet to urge him into action; the President also sent him a letter advising him to fight.

While at Groce's, Houston dispatched an express, ordering all reinforcements from the east to halt at Robbins's Ferry, on the Trinity, until the army joined them.

There was an arrangement among the volunteers to elect a new commander, in case Houston refused to take the Harrisburg road near Donoho's.

At San Jacinto, Houston went into battle very reluctantly.

Deaf Smith *begged* permission to destroy Vince's bridge.]

\* \* \* As a member of the Convention, a position quite incompatible with his higher and more pressing duties, Gen. Houston was of no practical utility. He asked and received a renewal of his commission as commander-in-chief. This was a useless consumption of time; for all, civil and military, recognized him as such as fully before as after the reappointment. \* \* \* After being urged by members of the Convention to hasten to the suffering army, he left Washington on the 6th of March for Gonzales, where a number of volunteers had assembled. \* \* \*

The same express that gave intelligence of the fall of the Alamo, told, also, that Gen. Houston and his little army were in rapid retreat from Gonzales. This was calculated, and did contribute to the general excitement. \* \* \*

But \* \* \* we must refer to the events at Gonzales. \* \* \* Major Heard says:

"I arrived at Gonzales on 6th March, 1836. Some four or five days after I got there, Gen. Houston arrived. On the 13th, Mrs. Dickinson and a negro boy belonging to Col. Travis arrived in camp, bringing the first reliable information of the fall of the Alamo. On the night of the 13th, about the time the men were preparing their night's repast, Gen. Houston came down and ordered the horses to be got up, and the fires put out; after which such a scramble and confusion commenced as I had never witnessed. About 10 o'clock at night we were ordered to move, by whom I do

not recollect; \* \* \*. As to guards, we had none; there was no order or regularity in the retreat from there to Peach Creek, ten miles east. The town of Gonzales was burnt; by whose order I do not know, but believe it was by Gen. Houston's, for the reason that it was generally talked of and believed so to be in camp. Captain Bird Lockhart, who arrived in Gonzales on the morning of the 14th, when it was on fire, told me that the men who were setting fire to the houses said they were left there by Gen. Houston, to burn the town and gather up the horses. Some of the women and children had started before we did; some started with us, and we left others crying and screaming in the town. Some we passed on the road that night between Gonzales and Peach Creek.

(Signed)

“W. I.<sup>1</sup> E. HEARD,

“ELI MERCER.”

In a later communication, Major Heard says:

“I never heard one word about *poisoned liquor* of any kind (at Gonzales).” \* \* \*

The retreat from Gonzales was so hurried, that the picket guard was left at its post without notice to withdraw. Two small pieces of artillery were thrown into the river Guadalupe. \* \* \*

Major Heard estimated the forces at Gonzales over four hundred men; and says they all had their rifles with abundant ammunition, and there was no want of provisions. After the arrival of Gen. Houston, the brave Burleson was elected colonel, and Sherman lieutenant-colonel. The volunteers were not without such “organization” as had achieved the most brilliant victories of Texas. \* \* \*

The retreat from Gonzales was inevitable, an absolute necessity. The grand error had consisted in choosing two feeble, isolated positions, Goliad and San Antonio, as the bases of defensive operations. \* \* \*

The retreat was continued in more order to Burnham's, on the west side of the Colorado, where the army arrived on the 17th of March. It remained there two days, then crossed the river and descended its left bank to Beason's. Burnham's buildings were destroyed soon after leaving them; it was generally understood in camp by the order of Gen. Houston. The army tarried a considerable time at Beason's in recuperative inactivity. \* \* \* The

<sup>1</sup>This should be J.—E. C. B.

army at Beason's received daily accessions of men, who came to fight the enemy. \* \* \*

Almost simultaneously with Houston's arrival at Beason's the Mexican Gen. Sesma, with a force variously estimated at 600 to 800 men (sixty or seventy being cavalry) and two field pieces, took position on the right bank of the Colorado. \* \* \* There is no one matter of fact connected with this campaign that has been more controverted and misstated, than the number of men composing the army at the Colorado. \* \* \*

Col. Ben. F. Smith, Acting Quartermaster and Adj.-General, says: "The number of men \* \* \* was about 1360;" \* \* \* This was sworn to. Ex-President Anson Jones says: "We had, by the report of the day, over 1500 men (I think 1570)" \* \* \*

Major Wm. I. E. Heard—his communication being signed by Eli Mercer—says: "Our numerical force was from 1500 to 1600 men, the morning the army left the Colorado." \* \* \*

Col. Amasa Turner, \* \* \* says: \* \* \* "I am confident I am not mistaken. The morning report, including Sherman's command, was 1464, rank and file. Rowan's and Fisher's companies joined at the first camp (after the retreat), five miles from the Colorado. These would swell the number to 1568, at the five mile camp." We have a printed handbill, issued by Capt. John Sharp, and dated Brazoria, March 27, 1836, in which the following occurs: "Our army now encamped at or near Beason's, on the Colorado, consists of 1000 to 1200 men, and reinforcements coming in hourly. \* \* \* On my way down, I met several small companies pushing on for our camp; and those that came from the eastward, report from 300 to 500 men on their way from that quarter." \* \* \*

From a letter by Col. James Tarleton \* \* \* dated November 6, 1855, \* \* \* we extract the following: "Gen. Houston's little army was at least 1800 strong the morning he ordered the \* \* \* retreat from the Colorado." \* \* \*

The army remained at Beason's from the 18th,<sup>1</sup> noon, to the 27th March. During this entire period, Gen. Sesma was on the other side of the Colorado, within striking distance, and with certainly not over 800 men, not more than sixty or seventy of them being mounted. He had one piece of artillery. \* \* \* Col. Sherman

<sup>1</sup>It arrived at Beason's on the 20th.—E. C. B.

solicited Gen. Houston to permit him to cross with his division of 350 to 400 men, and attack Sesma, perfectly confident of his ability to rout him, with small loss; \* \* \* This request was peremptorily refused, and Sherman was ordered by no means to provoke an attack by the enemy.

On the 20th of March Col. Fannin surrendered, and on the 27th the tremendous massacre was perpetrated. \* \* \*

On the morning of the 27th<sup>1</sup> the retreat was resumed, and on the 28th the army arrived at San Felipe on the Brazos; \* \* \*

Capt. Mosely Baker, with a company of 120 men, tarried at San Felipe, while the main army, now reduced to nearly one-half, pushed onward to Groce's Crossing, which they reached, greatly fatigued in body and mind, on the 31st March. Gen. Houston took position in a muddy, insulated area, within the Brazos bottom, where he continued some twelve days, and where disease soon invaded his camp.

Santa Anna, being informed of the retreat of the Texans from the Colorado, and that Sesma also had effected a passage of that stream, repaired with expedition to the headquarters of that chief, and took personal command of his division, still numbering not over 800 men,<sup>2</sup> with one field-piece, a 12-pounder. \* \* \* On the 7th April he reached San Felipe, or its smouldering ruins. Capt. Baker, being apprised of the enemy's approach, set fire to the town, after removing what was movable, and reduced it to ashes.<sup>3</sup> This one fact, the burning of San Felipe, has elicited a diametrical contradiction between Gen. Houston and his subaltern. The former alleges unequivocally that it was not done by his order. Capt. Baker made a formal deposition before the Auditorial Court, a special judicature got up in 1838 for the liquidation of claims against the government, that Gen. Houston did, by writing in pencil, order him to burn the town. \* \* \*

About this period, President Burnet and the cabinet being averse

<sup>1</sup>Houston began to fall back from the Colorado late in the afternoon of the 26th.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>General Tolsa had come up on the 24th, increasing Sesma's force to 1400 men; but none of the Texans seem to have known it at the time.—E. C. B.

<sup>3</sup>This was done on March 29.—E. C. B.

to the retreating policy of the Commander-in-Chief, it was determined that the Secretary of War, Col. Thomas J. Rusk, should repair to the army, and inaugurate a better and more effective system of strategy. As this also is a controverted point, we subjoin a note from Col. William T. Austin, one of the heroes of San Antonio:

*To Messrs. Richardson, Editors, etc.*

GENTLEMEN: \* \* \* I beg to say, that when on a visit to the official apartment of President Burnet, in Harrisburg, in the month of April, 1836, he informed me that a meeting of his cabinet had taken place, and had resulted in a determination to send Col. Thomas J. Rusk (then Secretary of War), to the field with orders to stop a further retreat of the army, and to bring the enemy to battle. While conversing on this subject, the Secretary of the Navy, Col. Potter, came in with the order to Col. Rusk, which he read to the President in my presence. \* \* \*

The order to Col. Rusk went on to ignore the propriety of our army making a further retreat, \* \* \*. Col. Rusk was therefore ordered to repair to the headquarters of the army, and to compel it to take up a position before the enemy, and bring him to battle at the first favorable position possible. \* \* \* The President \* \* \* stated that Col. Rusk was then being sent to the field with authority to take charge and command of the army, if necessary to carry out the policy indicated in the order. \* \* \*

(Signed)

Yours, etc.,

WILLIAM T. AUSTIN.

Galveston, May 23d, 1859.

In accordance with the above mentioned order, Col. Rusk left Harrisburg about the first of April, and arrived at the army while it lay among the foul and turbid lagoons of the Brazos bottom. \* \* \* President Burnet, hearing of no change in the movements of the army, \* \* \* addressed a note to Gen. Houston, which we insert. \* \* \*

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, HARRISBURG, April, 1836.

*To Gen. Sam Houston.*

SIR: The enemy are laughing you to scorn. You must fight them. You must retreat no farther. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on your doing so.

DAVID G. BURNET.

\* \* \* \* \*

Previous to leaving the Brazos, Gen. Houston dispatched an officer (Major Diggs) to the Trinity, with orders to stop all volunteers. \* \* \* It was received by Gen. Quitman, who was hastening on to join the Texian army, \* \* \*

Santa Anna \* \* \* on the 9th April marched down the river to Fort Bend \* \* \* and crossed on the 12th instant. \* \* \* He marched directly and hastily for Harrisburg. \* \* \* He established his headquarters there on the 18th April.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \* He burnt Harrisburg. \* \* \*

The position of the invading army, at this period and for some time previous, was singularly injudicious, and exposed to a rapid destruction in detail. Santa Anna's immediate command was something over seven hundred men, with one field-piece. Urrea was at Matagorda, with some twelve hundred men; Gaona (diverging from his original route) was lost in the country between Bastrop and San Felipe, with seven hundred and twenty-five men; Filisola about to cross the Brazos low down, with two thousand more. (*Yoakum*, in part, Vol. II, 122.)

General Houston broke up at the Brazos on the 16th April, and marched to Donohue's,<sup>2</sup> a few miles in the prairie. Here the road to the Trinity forked, the right-hand prong leading to Harrisburg, and here much excitement occurred. \* \* \*

Ex-President Anson Jones says: "Gen. Houston intended to cross the Neches (not the Sabine) without fighting. At Donohue's he was *compelled*, by the unanimous sense of the army, to deflect from the road, and go to Harrisburg." \* \* \*

Major Heard and Eli Mercer say: "We believe that Gen. Houston intended to take the road to the Trinity when he arrived at the fork at Donohue's because he had sent Major Diggs, with another individual, to Robbins' ferry, on the Trinity, to stop all recruits coming to the army at that place. The men believing this to be his intention, made no secret of their dissatisfaction, and there was an arrangement among them, that in case he took the road to the Trinity with his regulars, the volunteers would call out for a

<sup>1</sup>Santa Anna arrived the night of the 15th, and left on the 18th.—E. C. B.

<sup>2</sup>He encamped at Donoho's the night of the 14th, and reached McCurley's, where it seems another road diverged to the Trinity, on the 16th.—E. C. B.



leader to go at their head to Harrisburg to meet the enemy, all of which we believe was known to Gen. Houston, and which we think was the cause of his turning in that direction. In our march from Donohue's, we came to a fork in the road, one leading to Harrisburg, the other to San Jacinto, eastward. Gen. Houston and a part of the army had passed the fork, taking the latter route, when the army came to a halt, and well nigh to mutiny, the volunteers wishing to cross at Harrisburg and meet the enemy, and we believe Gen. Houston was going eastward. Finally it was agreed to cross Buffalo Bayou about two miles below Harrisburg, and we took a middle route to that place." Major Heard commanded a company of volunteers at this time.

Ex-Governor Robinson, under date of January 4, 1847, says: "In the campaign of 1836, Gen. Houston manifested the strongest determination to retreat to the Red lands, or across the Sabine, and was only prevented by President Burnet's order, sent by the Secretary of War, Gen. Thomas J. Rusk, who urged and commanded him to abandon his retreat and take the road to Harrisburg. \* \* \* President Burnet's order, and the command of Gen. Rusk, were powerfully aided by an almost united resolution by the men to meet and fight the enemy." \* \* \*

Gen. Sherman, under date February 3d, 1847, says: "I do believe Gen. Houston intended to take the road to the Trinity, when he arrived at the fork near Donohue's; but that he would have been constrained by the troops to take the road to Harrisburg, there is not the least doubt, had not the Secretary of War issued him a peremptory order, requiring him to take the Harrisburg road." \* \* \*

He \* \* \* took the Harrisburg fork of the road. The now reconciled troops moved with alacrity, and arrived at Buffalo Bayou, about two miles below the town, still smouldering in its ruins, before midday of the 18th instant. Here they halted for the night. The ever vigilant Deaf Smith was out as usual, scouting, and captured a Mexican courier bearing dispatches to Santa Anna. \* \* \* It was on this evening, too, that the epistle to Mr. H. Raguet, of Nacogdoches, was indited.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The Texian army was excited [in camp at San Jacinto] by

<sup>1</sup>The letter is printed in *Yoakum*, II, 498; also *supra*, 321.

rumors that an order had been given by the commander-in-chief to construct a floating bridge across Buffalo Bayou. \* \* \* Col. Amasa Turner \* \* \* says: "It was current in the army that Gen. Houston was not disposed to fight, but to build a floating bridge across the bayou. This was very unpopular, the men saying they would not work to build a bridge." \* \* \* Major Heard says: "On the morning of the 21st there was a council of war held. After it adjourned, I asked Col. Somervell what they determined on: he told me, nothing; that Houston had proposed to build a bridge across Buffalo Bayou, but the other members of the council would not agree to it." \* \* \*

Gen. M. B. Lamar says (*Galveston News*, June 23, 1855): "Some time after the council of war, I met Gen. Houston, and expressed to him the strong desire of the army to make battle. He replied merely as follows: 'Sir, can I whip Santa Anna and his whole army by myself? Would you have me attack them alone? The officers are all opposed to fighting, and so are the men. I have always been ready to fight, but the army has not, and how can I battle?' \* \* \* At the moment we were all preparing for battle, and his lines were actually forming, Houston came to me and said, \* \* \* 'Col. Lamar, do you really think we ought to fight?' " \* \* \*

Our estimable friend, Major Heard, says: "About 11 o'clock on the 21st (April) Deaf Smith rode up to Gen. Houston and said: I want you to let me go and burn Vince's bridge. Houston objected, \* \* \* Smith insisted on burning the bridge, to prevent any more reinforcements from joining Santa Anna. Houston, after a good deal of altercation, consented, and Deaf Smith and Moses Lappum went and *burned* the bridge." \* \* \*

The battle of San Jacinto has been described, \* \* \* The opposing forces were about equal, something over seven hundred each, the Mexicans somewhat superior, until the morning of the 21st, when the arrival of Gen. Cos with some 500 men, gave a large numerical preponderance to the hostile camp. \* \* \*

The Secretary of War, Col. Rusk, was in the field as an *amateur*. He took no specific command, and pretended to none.

## IX.

*R. J. Calder's Recollections of the Campaign.*

[The paper from which this is taken *passim* was published in the *Texas Almanac*, 1861, 62-70. The writer was a captain of volunteers, was with the army from Gonzales to San Jacinto, and tells his story clearly and dispassionately.

*Summary:* The Texans had about 1400 men at the Colorado. Houston declared that he knew he could have defeated Sesma's division here, but he would necessarily have had men wounded in the engagement, and he had no means of transporting these; that he really had not enough wagons to transport a sufficiency of ammunition.

The writer believes that Houston's long delay at Groce's was for purposes of discipline.

At the fork of the roads leading to Harrisburg and to East Texas Calder's company was in the advance guard. They halted for a short time, and then received an order to take the Harrisburg road. Captain Calder does not remember to have heard of any "altercation" or "mutinous conduct" at this point.

A refusal by the commander-in-chief to fight at San Jacinto would have produced a general mutiny.

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st, Colonel Burleson took the vote of the captains of his regiment upon whether the army should attack Santa Anna immediately, or wait until 4 o'clock the next morning. All except Calder and Moseley Baker voted for immediate attack.

Houston had a real reluctance to fight at San Jacinto, and desired, in case of defeat, to fall back upon the excuse that he fought against his better judgment.]

\* \* \* The brief period spent at Gonzales in organizing our little army was barren of incident, \* \* \* That night we commenced a retreat to the Colorado, and were joined daily by volunteers from the country west of the Trinity, but by very few east of that stream. On arriving at the Colorado, a detachment of some one hundred and fifty or two hundred men were left at Dewees' ferry, and the main army encamped for several days on the east side of the Colorado, about a mile (as near as I can recollect) from the river, and opposite Beason's. The writer was left with a detachment from Captain Splann's company, in addition to his own, at Beason's, on the west bank of the river, under the immediate command of Major Benjamin F. Smith.

The morning after taking our position, Major Smith left our

encampment at Beason's with about one hundred men, to skirmish with the enemy. After an absence of about an hour, they returned, bringing intelligence that the advance of the enemy was close at hand, and ordered our detachment to the east side of the river.

\* \* \*

I think about the third or fourth day after crossing the Colorado, a detachment of some two hundred mounted volunteers were sent over the river to skirmish with the enemy. \* \* \* They returned, after a short absence, without reporting any positive results from their enterprise. \* \* \*

Here there was a strong desire on the part of a large portion of the army to attack this division of the enemy, numbering about seven hundred men, and a considerable murmuring was heard at the commander-in-chief's refusal to gratify this desire. That we might have routed them, I have *no doubt*. I think our muster-rolls showed that we had some fourteen hundred men at the time. \* \* \* General Houston rode alongside me, and, after a courteous salutation, requested my views of the movements of the army. I replied \* \* \* I thought, however, we might have whipped the Mexicans we left at the Colorado; but I supposed his policy would be to draw the enemy into the heart of the country \* \* \* where a defeat to the enemy would be final and complete. To this, General Houston replied: \* \* \* "To be sure, we could have whipped the Mexicans back at the Colorado; but we can't fight battles without having men killed and wounded. But we actually have not the means of conveying as much ammunition and baggage as we need, much less the means of conveying wounded men after an action; besides, a defeat to the enemy at the Colorado would inevitably have concentrated the other divisions of the Mexican army against us." He further remarked that we would take some eligible position on the Brazos, at San Felipe, or in its vicinity, and, having the advantage of the steamboat,<sup>1</sup> we would drop down or go up, as the case might be, and give the enemy battle. \* \* \*

Much has been said of our encampment [at Groce's], and the motives which impelled General Houston to encamp and remain

<sup>1</sup>This allusion to the steamboat is probably anachronistic; it is doubtful whether Houston knew anything about it until his arrival at San Felipe. (See *supra*, 320).—E. C. B.

there as long as he did. My own impressions have always been that it was for discipline. \* \* \*

After we left the Brazos, much has been said of a disorderly movement in our army, occurring at the forks of the roads leading to Harrisburg and Eastern Texas. I will only state, under this head, that my company formed the advance guard of the army on that and the previous day, and to the best of my recollection, after a short halt at that point, I received an order to take the right-hand road. I do not recollect to have seen or heard of any altercation, nor do I think there was any mutinous conduct.

On the day we reached Harrisburg the hearts of our little army were cheered by the capture of a Mexican officer, and a courier bearing dispatches from the Mexican officers in Texas to the government at home.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \*

\* \* \* And the next morning the whole army commenced crossing, and got over in marching order, I think about sundown, including one hundred and fifty mounted volunteers under the command of the gallant and efficient colonel of the Second regiment, Sidney Sherman. The balance of the army under the rank of a field or staff officer were dismounted and their horses and baggage left at Harrisburg, Captain P. B. Splann's company having been detached to guard the sick and baggage. \* \* \*

[20th] Our Mexican *friends*, finding our position a good one, made some show of attack, their cavalry menacing our right, their artillery playing upon us, and slightly wounding two of our men; but finding no impression was made, they fell back to a position about half a mile from ours, still keeping up a fire upon our encampment with a 9-pounder (I think) from a small mot of timber about four or five hundred yards from our encampment, until Colonel Sherman commenced to muster his mounted men to dislodge them and take their cannon, when it was covertly removed to their main body in the rear.

The gallant colonel was not to be balked, however, of his chance of a brush. He made a dash for the cannon, but finding it had been removed, \* \* \* he made an attempt at the enemy's cav-

<sup>1</sup>This is a mistake. The officer was bearing dispatches to Santa Anna from the government, while the courier was returning to Santa Anna from General Filisola's encampment at Fort Bend.—E. C. B.

alry. I think his view must have been thus to bring on a general engagement. \* \* \*

The next morning, the 21st of April, there was a restless and anxious spirit pervading the camp; \* \* \* rumor said that the Mexicans had been largely reinforced at an early hour that morning; and for once rumor did not lie. General Cos had effected a junction that morning with the commander-in-chief, Santa Anna; and it was further said that we were to cross the bayou, by some means, perhaps by making a raft of Zavala's house, and continue our retreat to the east. I do not recollect to have heard a single man hint that he was in favor of such a move. \* \* \* Hence, if there was an idea of retreat, as has been charged, it was certainly not based on the remotest disposition of those who were to meet the charge of the enemy, nor was any such idea based on prudence, as, in my humble judgment, refusal to fight on the part of the commander-in-chief would have mutinied the greater part, if not the entire army.

After the reinforcements of the enemy had crossed in the morning of the 21st, as above stated, our commander-in-chief ordered Deaf Smith to take a party and demolish the bridge over Vince's bayou, which was done accordingly; and about the hour of three or four o'clock in the afternoon, our colonel, Edward Burleson, rode along the line of encampment of his regiment, and ordered the captains of the same to meet him \* \* \* forthwith. They followed on, \* \* \* when our colonel told us he wished to take our vote upon the best time for attacking the enemy—whether immediately or at four o'clock the next morning. All the captains but Mosely Baker and myself voted for immediate attack; Baker and myself for four o'clock in the morning. Upon which we were ordered to parade our companies for immediate action.

\* \* \* As so much has been said about General Houston's reluctance to fight on that occasion, I will simply give my own conclusions, without charging him with, or believing he felt a positive reluctance to fight. I think he wished, in case of failure or disaster, an apology, towit, that he fought against his own judgment, and suffered himself to be controlled by the opinions and clamor of his officers and men. \* \* \*

The fire from our division was delivered when we were within sixty yards of the foe. \* \* \* The action was very poorly con-

tested on the part of the enemy. \* \* \* Just before sunset the pursuit and massacre was brought to a sudden stand by Colonel Almonte's halting the terrified Mexicans in a solid body or column, and making a formal surrender. \* \* \*

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X.

*Zuber's Account of the Camp at Harrisburg.*

[The letter from which this is extracted *passim* was published in the *Texas Almanac*, 1861, 58-60. The writer was a member of the camp guard left by General Houston at Harrisburg, while the main army went to meet the enemy at San Jacinto.

*Summary:* About 150 men were detailed to guard the Harrisburg camp. This number was increased to perhaps 200 by the arrival of stragglers.]

\* \* \* On the 18th of April, 1836, the Texas army arrived at a point on the northeast side of Buffalo bayou, opposite to Harrisburg, about a quarter of a mile distant. On the evening of the same day, from documents found in the captured Mexican mail, it was learned that Santa Anna, with his immediate command, had gone down towards New Washington, and that General Cos, with 600 or more effective troops, would arrive at Harrisburg on or about the 20th. On the next morning (the 19th) General Houston ordered 150 men to be detailed, *pro rata*, from the different companies, to remain at our present encampment, to guard the sick and the baggage, while the main army would proceed down the bayou, in pursuit of Santa Anna. This order was, as far as practicable, immediately carried into effect. Two entire companies (Splann's and Kuykendall's, both very small) were left with the guard. The captains of the other companies attempted to fill their detachments with volunteers, but I believe none of them quite succeeded; and in some companies (I believe in most, if not all of them) many of the sick were counted, as the required number of sound men could not possibly be induced to remain. This circumstance, however, is no detraction to those who did remain. Those required to remain were placed in an unenviable dilemma. On the one hand was certainty, with no incumbrance, to encounter the flower of the Mexican army, and no one doubted of victory; and on the other

hand, in charge of the sick, and of heavy, immovable baggage, was probability of conflict in which they must oppose more than thrice their number, with no chance to attack or even to change position for defense, and more than a double chance to be overpowered, crushed, and routed. \* \* \* Sympathy for the sick and the importance of protecting the ammunition, with the fear that the guard could not be made strong enough, caused them to consent to remain.

On the same day, the main army proceeded down the bayou. On the 20th, some men that had been left sick at Donoho's came up, making our number about 200, including the sick. On the night of the 20th, as we confidently expected, Cos's division, six hundred strong, entered Harrisburg. \* \* \* Having received an express from Santa Anna, Cos decamped, and marched with his division down the bayou. \* \* \*

Respectfully and truly yours,

W. P. ZUBER.

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XI.

*Burning of Vince's Bridge.*

[This letter was published in the *Texas Almanac*, 1861, 55-58. The writer says the idea of destroying Vince's bridge originated with John Coker, and that Deaf Smith proposed it to Houston, and secured permission to destroy the bridge.]

SAN ANTONIO, January 14, 1858.

*Hon. Jesse Grimes:* \* \* \*

On the morning of the 21st of April, 1836, Captain Carnes' cavalry company, commonly called Deaf Smith's Spy Company, were drawn up in line on the edge of Gen. Houston's position. As well as I recollect, we were between thirty and forty strong. \* \* \* While sitting in our saddles, John Coker, my left file-leader, made the following remark, and the suggestions following:

"Boys, \* \* \* I believe it would be a good idea to go and burn that bridge, so as not only to impede the advance of reinforcements of the enemy, but it will cut off all chance of retreat of either party."



The proposition was seconded by the whole company, when Deaf Smith proposed to go and see the General, and get his approval of the enterprise. \* \* \* Smith told us Houston asked him: "Can you do it without being cut to pieces by the Mexican cavalry?" Smith said that he replied to Houston: "Give me six men, and I will try." \* \* \*

He said: "I want six men. I am going to burn the bridge." \* \* \* I will here mention the names of all who joined Deaf Smith in the enterprise; \* \* \* Deaf Smith, Denmore Rives, John Coker, Y. P. Alsbury, — Rainwater, John Garner, — Lapham. \* \* \*

In a few minutes the bridge was in flames. If I recollect aright, it was built of cedar. \* \* \*

Respectfully and truly yours,

Y. P. ALSBURY.

I, John Coker, of the county of Bexar, State of Texas, have no hesitation in stating that the material facts in the preceding narrative are correct.

Signed this 7th day of January, 1858.

JOHN COKER.

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## XII.

### *Amasa Turner's Account of the Battle.*

[This account of the battle of San Jacinto has never before been printed. Captain Turner, who commanded a company of regulars during the campaign, wrote it in August, 1874, at the request of Hon. Guy M. Bryan, to whose collection of papers the MS. belongs.

The letter deals mainly with the disputed question of Houston's ordering a halt during the battle. The writer believes that he did not do so, and thinks the report that he did was maliciously spread by Colonel R. M. Coleman.]

At the battle of San Jacinto, after our line had taken the enemy's breastworks, and in passing them, our line was thrown into great confusion, and at that time and place the rout commenced. The enemy had not time to form in rear of their breastworks before the Texians were with them, and seemed to have the issue in their

own hands. Many of the company officers made an effort to form their command after passing the breastworks, but failed to [do] so. I, however, succeeded in forming a part of company into something like a line, and in the course of two hundred yards they all got into line, and we joined in the rout, in something like order in my company. After pursuing a few hundred yards at double-quick step, I heard the command given from near, "Halt, halt!" I looked round, and Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Millard was advancing, calling, "Halt, halt!" I did not order my company to halt until he came up and called out, "Captain Turner, halt your company, sir!" I then, as soon [as] possible, halted my command, and formed a line, and here I will remark that after I halted my company, that there was not a single gun fired by the enemy. They had thrown away their guns, and were running to get away, and Almonte, in a few minutes after, herded them and surrendered to General Rusk some five or six hundred yards from where I halted my command. Before Colonel Millard had time to give me his orders, Colonel J. A. Wharton rode up from the rear also, and cried out, "*Regulars, why have you stopped? On, on,*" and was about to pass us when Colonel Millard spoke to him. I did not hear the conversation between them. The result, however, was that Colonel M. said to me, he detailed my company to return to the battle ground and take charge of it by placing a guard around the Mexican camp. At this time I saw General Houston with some of his staff with him walking their horses slowly from the rear from the same direction that Colonel Millard and Colonel Wharton had come from, and it was from the direction of the battle field. When we got up to them—that is, Wharton, Millard and my company soon met Houston, and those with him were Inspector-General Geo. W. Hockley, Wm. G. Cook, James Collinsworth, and Volunteer Aids R. Eden Handy and Colonel R. M. Coleman. All this company returned to the battlefield with me and my company. After my arrival I halted my company near the gun (12-pounder) we had taken, and formed a line, and stood at ease. General Houston's company seemed to scatter and leave him as we came on the camp and battle ground, and he rode up in front of my company and stopped his horse, and in a minute or so he threw up his hands and exclaimed, "*All is lost, all is lost; my God, all is lost.*" This drew my attention to him. I saw he was looking at General Rusk

with the surrendered Mexicans on their way to our camp on Buffalo bayou. There was a spy glass lying on the ground near him, which [I] took up and handed him, and said, "Take this, General, it will assist you in ascertaining what that is out there in the prairie." He took it, and just then some one, I think my first Lieut., spoke and said that Rusk had a very respectable army now. Houston said to me, "Is that Rusk?" I said, "Yes, certainly, that is Rusk with the prisoners." I am of the opinion that when he first saw Rusk that he thought it was Filisola from Richmond; hence, his "*All is lost.*" By this time his staff were about him or near by. General Houston exclaimed, "*Have I a friend in this world? Col. Wharton, I am wounded, I am wounded; have I a friend in this world?*" Wharton said, "I wish I was [wounded?]; yes, General, I hope you have many friends." It was now about sunset, and the general and commander-in-chief, with staff and aids, left the battle ground for our camp on Buffalo bayou, and must have arrived there about the time that Rusk did with the prisoners.

\* \* \* I have led you in the above round-about way to times and places in order that you might perfectly understand where and under what circumstances, and the time that General Houston or others made use of the order to halt.

I will now give you something more from hearsay:

Captain Isaac Moreland, a gentleman and a soldier, and was attached to the artillery on that day, for some cause I do not at this time recollect, lingered on the battlefield, and whilst there discovered a parcel of men engaged, as he thought, in the act of plundering the effects left on the ground by the enemy. He said they [were] breaking packages, and he told them to desist, as he would report them. He said he then left, and came up to where General Houston and staff were, and reported to him the fact, and that General Houston called out, "Halt, halt!" and sent Colonel Millard to detail a company and put a guard around the Mexican camp; that Millard left, overtook my company, and called me by name, and ordered me to halt, and detailed my company to return as above stated. Now, you will perceive that Captain Millard's remarks to me fit so well with what I have stated before mentioning his name that I believe every word of it.

Now, I will, as I think, explain how it was ever reported that

General Houston ever ordered a halt on the battlefield, etc.: At the time of the battle of San Jacinto R. M. Coleman, volunteer aid to Houston, was friendly with him, but soon afterwards became Houston's most inveterate enemy, as you know from the history of 1836, and as he was with Houston at the time Moreland came up and reported what was going on on the battlefield, it is not impossible, but probable, that General Houston did, under the circumstances, order a halt and give Colonel Millard the orders before mentioned. \* \* \*

I will now close with a single remark, that if General Houston did, on receiving Moreland's report of the plundering of the Mexican camp, order a halt, to whom did he give that order? There was no one with him but his staff and two aids, together with Captain Moreland and Col. Henry Millard commanding the regulars, and at time Moreland reported to Houston, there was not a captain's command in sight of him but mine that could be identified. We were regular soldiers. Houston might have preferred regulars for the duty required; hence, his order to detail that company in sight for that express duty. \* \* \*

I do [not] believe that General Houston ever ordered a halt of the army, or even wished or expected to halt it, but that he articulated the word "halt," surrounded by his staff and aids, I have no doubt.

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